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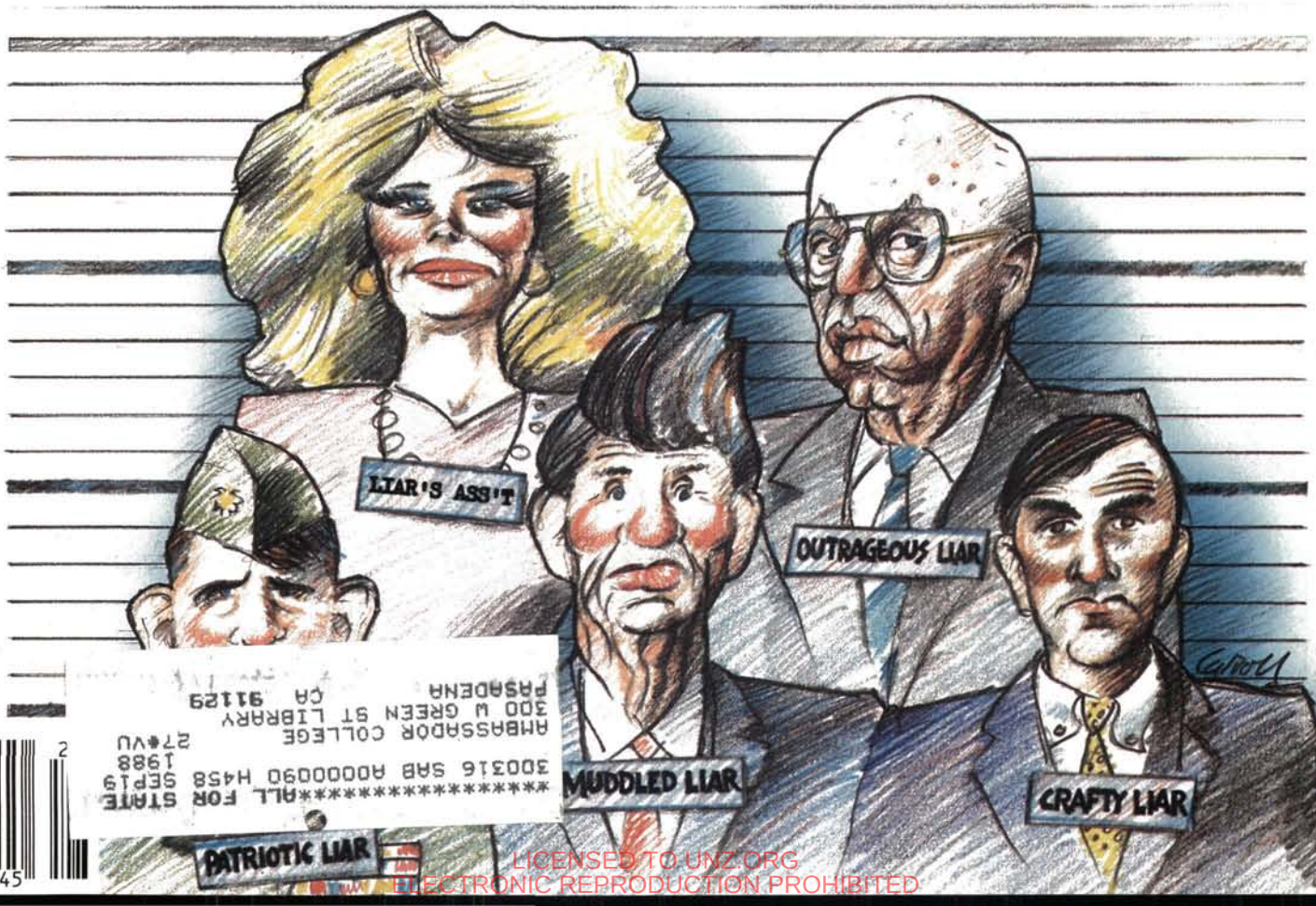

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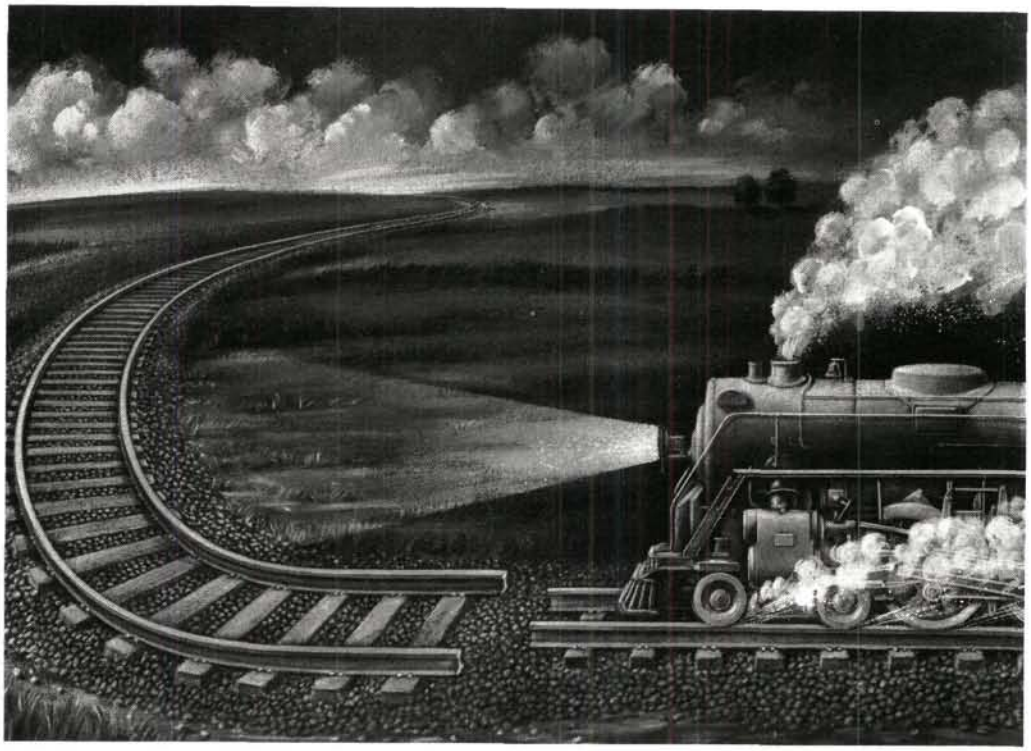
Issues of the Information Age:

The way beyond Babel.



Imagine trying to build a railroad system if every locomotive manufacturer used a different track gauge. Every local stretch of railroad had its own code of signals. And in order to ride a train, you needed to know the gauges and the signals and the switching procedures and the route and the conductor's odd pronunciation of the station names.

The business of moving and managing information is in a similar state today. Machines can't always talk to each other. Proprietary systems and networks abound, with suppliers often jockeying to make theirs the de facto standard. The enormous potential of the Information Age is being dissipated by incompatibility.

The solution, as we see it, is common standards which would allow electronic systems in one or many locations to work together. People will be informed and in control, while the systems exchange, process, and act on information automatically.

AT&T is working with national, international, and industry-wide organizations to set up comprehensive, international standards to be shared by everyone who uses and provides information technology. We think it's time for everyone in our industry to commit to developing firm, far-reaching standards. The goal: to provide our customers with maximum flexibility and utility. Then, they can decide how and with whom to work.

We foresee a time when the promise of the Information Age will be realized. People will participate in a worldwide Telecommunity through a vast, global network of networks, the merging of communications and computers. They'll be able to handle information in any form—conversation, data, images, text—as easily as they make a phone call today.

The science is here now. The technology is coming along rapidly. But only with compatibility will the barriers to Telecommunity recede.

Telecommunity is our goal. Technology is our means.℠

We're committed to leading the way.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUES 3,782 & 3,783

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FROM WASHINGTON

Angel Of Death Loophole

When you keep your money in a savings account or money market fund, you pay taxes on the interest every year whether you withdraw it or not. When you own stock, you don't pay taxes on the profit until you sell out. If you bought the stock at $1,000 and you sell it at $1,500, you pay tax on a "capital gain" of $500. In tax lingo, $1,000 is called your "basis." If you got the stock as a gift, your basis is whatever your donor paid for it. All pretty reasonable.

But what happens if you inherited the stock? Here the tax code contains a bizarre loophole. Your basis is the value when you inherited it. If your benefactor bought the stock for $1,000, he died when it was worth $1,450, and you sold it for $1,500, your capital gain is only $50. As my estate planning professor in law school explained with delight, "The angel of death comes along and 'steps up' the basis." A capital gain of $450 escapes tax forever.

This is no small matter. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that taxing capital gains when property is transferred at death would bring in about $5 billion a year. The administration's estimates (buried in the 1987 budget books) are more like $7 billion a year. To put these numbers in perspective, $5 billion a year is about what the administration's entire catastrophic health insurance plan for the elderly is expected to cost.

Five billion dollars is also more than a quarter of the $19 billion in new revenue the Democratic-controlled Congress is committed to finding for next year's budget. (In response to this responsible commitment, our hypocritical old toad of a Republican president denounced Congress for "caving in to its old tax-and-spend addiction"—meanwhile resorting to grotesque accounting flimflam to avoid a tax increase in his own budget.) Closing this loophole is one item on a Ways and Means Committee shopping list of possible revenue measures. There is no fairer or more efficient way to bring in five billion smackers.

Although this loophole has no rational justification, it is deeply treasured by its beneficiaries. So be prepared for flights of demagoguery and obfuscation in its defense. The main defenders will be lobbyists for "small" business and "family" farmers, two of the great political euphemisms of our day. Small businesses are not generally owned by small people. The typical small businessman is a lot wealthier than the typical shareholder of IBM.

The National Federation of Independent Businessmen, the small-business lobby, complains of "the inherent unfairness of taxing someone for dying." I'm not sure what's so unfair about this, but at any rate it misses the point. The issue is not some new death duty or estate tax. The issue is whether inherited property should escape entirely and forever from the ordinary income tax that most people pay on their wages and savings.

It's a trap to pretend that closing this loophole will only hurt the rich. There's no denying that it will also touch some middle-class people—especially those who have enjoyed spectacular run-ups in the value of their houses. But there is already a $125,000 lifetime exemption for any profit you make on your own house. Why shouldn't the lucky heirs of people who make more than this pay a bit of tax like everybody else?

Defenders of this loophole will make much of the terrible burden of paperwork that will be required of heirs who will have to figure out what their parents paid for this or that bit of property. Aw, poor babies. You can be sure that if the same paperwork were required to take advantage of some loophole, the burden would be shouldered without complaint. The people who would be hit hardest by this reform, and will lobby hardest against it, are financial sophisticates with no lack of business records.

It will be noted that the capital gains tax hits "phantom" profits that only reflect inflation. That's true. But it's also true of the tax on savings account interest. Unlike interest, capital gains are allowed to accrue and compound tax-free until they are cashed in. Whether this advantage outweighs the disadvantage depends on the rate of inflation and the size of the profit. In any event, there is no reason that only inherited property should get special treatment to account for inflation.

Finally, of course, there will be the usual blather about this "tax increase" destroying the incentive to produce and create. Any type of income tax does reduce the work incentive to some extent. But it's hard to think of a tax for which this is less of a problem than one that doesn't apply until you die. And, once again, given that we must have taxes, why should this particular category of income enjoy a tax rate of zero?

Besides the fairness issue and the need for revenue, there is an important economic efficiency—dare I say it, a "supply-side"—argument in favor of closing the loophole for inherited capital gains. Knowing that their profits will escape tax completely if they don't sell before they die leads people to hold on to investments they might otherwise liquidate. This phenomenon—called the "lock-in effect"—distorts the economy and also reduces government revenues by discouraging taxable transactions.

The "capital formation" lobby, responsible for so much expensive mischief over the past decade, frequently mentions the "lock-in" effect as a reason for lower capital gains taxes. The argument is that lower capital gains rates will encourage people to take their profits and thus actually increase government revenues. Nine Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee have used this argument in proposing to cut the top tax rate on capital gains almost in half—from 28 percent to 15 percent. But surely a more sensible way to reduce the "lock-in effect" is to close the loophole that makes it such a temptation, instead of opening another loophole to balance it out.

Special treatment for capital gains was one of the major distortions in the old tax code. Slicing the capital gains tax increased capital gains revenues not because of any "supply-side" magic but because people went to great, economy-distorting lengths to convert ordinary income into capital gains. Ending this insanity and reducing tax rates across the board was a triumph of tax reform it would be insane to throw away.

Although a mere $5 billion is at stake, the fate of the Ways and Means proposal to tax capital gains at death is a test of political integrity. Fiscal responsibility, fairness, and economic efficiency all dictate that this loophole be closed. Anyone who opposes this reform clearly has some other agenda.

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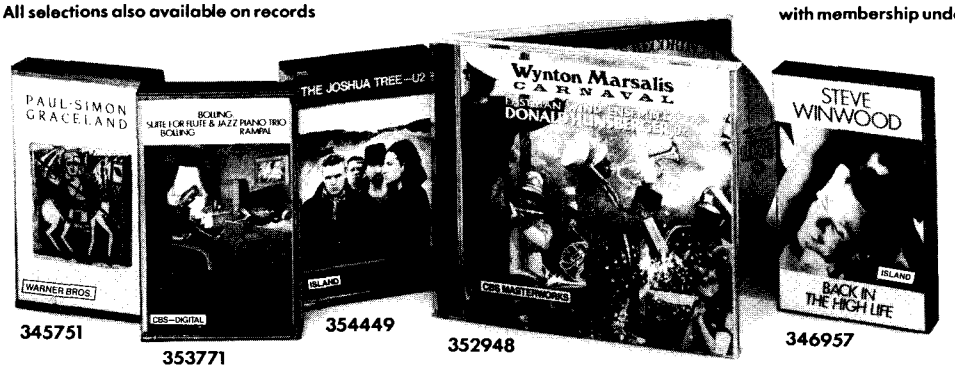

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346478. Madonna—True Blue. (Sire)

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FINE-TUNING THE BALLAD

To the editors:
In "The Ballad of Ron and Yasu" (June 15) Murray Sayle repeats the mistaken notion that the dollar remained "strong" against key exchange rates such as the Japanese yen and West German mark until after the meeting at the Plaza Hotel in September 1985. The fact is that the dollar began to fall on international exchange markets in *March* 1985, not September. The only international currency to act any differently after the Plaza meeting was the yen, due to domestic economic policy changes taken in Tokyo—not New York. Possibly the G5 finance minister's public statements helped to keep the dollar on a downward path, but that is unlikely in light of their inability to start a dollar decline in January 1985, try as they might, or to stop it last winter. When Treasury Secretary Baker talks, financial journalists may listen, but financial markets need more substance.

ANDREW DURANT
IRA KAMINOW
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
Even Japan's garrulous Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone has better control of his tongue than to have said that Japan considered asserting "complete and full control of the four straits [actually there are three] that go through the Japanese islands so that there should be no passage of Soviet submarines and other naval atrocities." What he actually said was "other naval activities." My piece left here on my excellent Japanese-made facsimile machine in the less belligerent form.

MURRAY SAYLE
Aikawa-Cho, Tokyo

ONE-TRACK PUBLISHING

To the editors:
As a trade book editor, I found Ted Solotaroff's analysis of publishing ("The Literary-Industrial Complex," June 8) well reasoned. But Solotaroff neglected to address one crucial question in his plea for publishers to return to a commitment to worthwhile pursuits: Who determines what is worthwhile? The noble publishing names he mentioned—Laughlin, Rosset, Godine, and others—are all white, all male, all "from money." I certainly do not mean to belittle their wonderful publishing programs; thank God they exist. But when looking at the gatekeepers to our common culture, I would hope to find more ethnic, racial, sexual, and economic diversity.

ROBERT LAVELLE
Boston, Massachusetts

To the editors:
My only regret about Ted Solotaroff's splendid article on the damage done to the publishing houses by the conglomerates is that he doesn't seem to understand that all was not well when he began his career in publishing "some 20 years ago." I am a Southern writer who began to publish in literary and scholarly journals in the late 1940s. For those of us who went against the grain, the doors of the New York publishing houses were closed. We found ways to be published, of course, but it's been an uphill struggle. Other regional writers—writers from "the provinces" who have something to say about national issues—have had a similar experience. It's been very unfortunate that the New York critical mentality has had a form of exclusive jurisdiction over books since the '40s. The country is poorer for this situation.

ANTHONY HARRINGTON
Washington, D.C.

REASSESSING ISRAEL

To the editors:
The tiny state of Israel has provided a well-deserved home for a people in diaspora. However, Henry Fairlie's claim that the mere existence of a Jewish state is what keeps the "undercurrent of anti-Semitism in all our countries from being translated into open discrimination, persecution, and even the Final Solution" is an overstatement ("Among the Anti-Semites," June 8). Anti-Semitism is fueled by jealousy and ignorance. Israel is an ensign to the world Jewish community, but it does not enlighten the ignorant. And there is no evidence that anti-Semites around the world are refraining from attacking Jews for fear of Israeli reprisals. Israel is recognized for its rigid application of Mosaic justice, but terrorist attacks on Jews and Israel continue.

Fairlie also writes that Israel has been a leader of European civilization. With its economy in ruin, Israel is not in a position to lead. Jews are leaders of Western civilization; Israel, however, is not. This is illustrated best by the emigrating Soviet bloc Jews. Most, when given a choice, elect Western Europe or the United States over Israel.

WILLARD SMITH
U.S. Embassy, Guatemala

DIFFERENT DRUM

To the editors:
Your Notebook item (June 15) on the canceled California appearance of Salvadoran president José Napoleón Duarte was misleading. The Coalition for Peace and Life in El Salvador expected 1,000 demonstrators to protest, not prohibit, the selling of U.S. foreign policy by President Duarte. We were denied equal time at the World Affairs Council program. It was in the interests of open discussion that another viewpoint be heard, by public protest if not in academic speech. TNR infers from the quotation "a real victory for the solidarity movement" that our object had been to silence Duarte, when actually our "victory" consisted of expressing the breadth of opposition that the mere word of Duarte's impending arrival could galvanize.

JOHN HUNTER
Monterey Bay Pledge of Resistance
Santa Cruz, California

THE 'GREAT' DEBATE

To the editors:
There is something ridiculous about lists of words that everyone should know, as well as books that everyone should read. What makes these lists suspect is not only the exclusion of women and minority writers, as your Washington Diarist notes ("Bad Ideas" by Louis Menand, June 22) but also the fact that there is no evidence that those who have read these great books are better prepared to deal with life in any capacity than those who have not. Thus, while teachers and other intellectuals debate which books, ideas, or words should be required knowledge, students and the general public see nothing in the lives of those who have read the great books that would support the claims that they make one virtuous. Until this changes, we can hardly expect anyone who does not have a professional interest in teaching the humanities to take *any* list of great books seriously.

LAWRENCE W. HYMAN
Ridgewood, New Jersey

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JULY 13 & 20, 1987

KOREA COUNSELING

South Korea's people and its friends abroad have every reason to expect it to be a full democracy. Economically and demographically, it is an advanced nation. Its GNP per capita is $2,300, making it richer by far than India, the Philippines, and Costa Rica, better off even than Portugal, Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, and Argentina, and just behind Venezuela. Twenty-five years ago, it was war-torn and poverty-stricken, with a GNP per capita of $100. Today, modern and increasingly prosperous, it has every reason for national pride and self-confidence. With one of the world's fastest growth rates (last year, 12.5 percent), it should feel secure about its future. It has a higher literacy rate than the United States, an income distribution system almost as fair as Canada's, and it is on a par with Western Europe and Japan in the percentage of its young people who attend college.

Politically, too, South Korea is much better off than many would-be and nascent democracies. It is ethnically homogeneous, unlike Taiwan and Sri Lanka. Unlike the Philippines and El Salvador, it faces no internal insurgencies. It is not ideologically riven, as Argentina has been and Chile remains. Except for a handful of radicals, South Korea's politicians and population all agree on the basics of capitalism, anti-communism, and alliance with the United States. It does face the constant external military menace of North Korea, but that is a binding force rather than a dividing one.

In spite of its advantages, though, South Korea is far from a democracy. It lacks a free press. Television is totally government-controlled. There are several hundred political prisoners, including (until his release last week) opposition leader Kim Dae Jung, who won 43 percent of the vote in the 1971 presidential race and whose life or freedom has been threatened practically ever since. Police arrest dissidents arbitrarily and often beat or torture them. The death of a student under police torture, and a subsequent cover-up attempt, helped spark the latest street rioting. The larger cause of the crisis was President Chun Doo Hwan's breakoff of talks with the opposition over political reform, and his move to install a hand-picked successor, Roh Tae Woo, through a biased electoral process scheduled for this December. Threatening all democratic political development is the military, which has seized power twice before during times of turmoil.

Fundamentally, South Korea is not a democracy now because it has practically no experience with freedom. In this respect it is at a disadvantage compared to the Philippines, which had free elections for nearly 26 years before Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972 and ran the country into the ground. In South Korea the military views itself as the guarantor of peace and progress, and until recently much of the public has shared that view. In 1960 student rioters brought down the government of President Syngman Rhee. The next nine months of attempted democratic rule were a time of disorder in the streets, which Gen. Park Chung Hee put down with a coup in 1961. He took off his uniform, but still ruled as an authoritarian until his assassination in 1979 by his intelligence chief. Before democracy could get a start, Chun and Roh, both generals, staged another coup. When students seized the city of

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Kwangju in May 1980, Chun ordered troops in, and they killed somewhere between 200 people (the government figure) and 2,000 (the opposition estimate). Chun remains about as popular in South Korea as Pinochet is in Chile.

Compared with Pinochet or Marcos, though, Chun has this going for him: he promised to quit after seven years in power, and he apparently means to do so. And, compared with Pinochet or Somoza, Chun has been restrained in the current street crisis, where the toll presently stands at one policeman dead and one student close to death. Chun's police are firing tear gas, not bullets. Moreover, he has moved to reopen constitutional dialogue, to release Kim Dae Jung from house arrest, to free other prisoners, and to meet with Kim Dae Jung's co-leader of the opposition, Kim Young Sam.

However, like other despots, Chun fears relinquishing power to his adversaries, lest he be put on trial for Kwangju or for alleged family corruption. The opposition threatens to do just that. So Chun wants Roh as his successor. U.S. government officials and journalistic observers say that Roh actually might be the best potential leader available for South Korea, though he is badly tainted by his ties to Chun.

Certainly most observers agree that South Korea lacks a Corazon Aquino, a clearly clean and widely popular democrat. The opposition's two Kims are often accused of opportunism, of favoring democracy not for itself but only as the means to bring themselves to power. Kim Dae Jung tends to be autocratic in the way he runs the opposition party. What's more, it's almost universally accepted that the military will never allow Kim Dae Jung to come to power, believing (without any good evidence) that he once collaborated in Japan with agents of North Korea. It's also widely feared that if Chun does not end street disorders soon, some current gener-

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	SEOUL MEN	6	2
2.	NORTH GOING SOUTH	*	29
3.	MANHATTAN	—	1
4.	BIG BANG THEORY	2	6
5.	RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP	—	1
6.	ON THE BEACH	*	4
7.	WHY THE HEATHEN RAGE	*	5
8.	THEY WERE EXPLOITABLE	—	1
9.	BIG AS THE RITZ	—	1
10.	HISTORIC LEVITTOWN	—	1

1. SEOUL MEN

South Korea. The most interesting angle in the South Korea story is the prominence that the middle class has been given. This is a foreign coverage archetype. One always hears of the unhappy middle class during crises in a given society. Afterward, whatever the resolution, it disappears.

2. NORTH GOING SOUTH

Iranamok. Under whatever circumstances North testifies, the real question of the resumed hearings is how much of a bull's-eye he remains. Reagan's popularity has saved him from direct targeting, but he's become a political shambles just as interest in the hearings has risen. And the focus now turns to the Iran aspect of the scandal, where Reagan's more vulnerable than on the *contras*.

3. MANHATTAN

Bernhard Goetz. The Goetz story changed greatly between the time it broke and its conclusion. At first it was about a "Deathwish Killer." But Goetz turned out to be less a Charles Bronson and more a Woody Allen. Commentary on the case never quite made the shift, continuing to treat Goetz as a potential cultural hero whose actions would be emulated. Not likely.

4. BIG BANG THEORY

Gulf aftermath. Fallout from the *Stark* attack continues. Coming under scrutiny is the complexity of expensive U.S. arms. In fact, faith in technology runs deep in the U.S. character, with on-paper firepower a postwar tenet of this faith. There is now concern that this has led to a philosophy of "manning arms," rather than "arming men," and that it doesn't work.

5. RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP

Savings & Loans. Record amounts have been withdrawn from S&Ls by depositors as their certificates have matured, especially in the Southwest. Depositors are concerned about S&L failures, and the ability of the FSLIC to make good their savings. This erosion of public confidence is a grave matter, so naturally efforts to address the problem have become a political football.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

6. ON THE BEACH

Ozone. Concern about ozone depletion is jelling, and the reason is that it's beach season. There are reports of a "skin cancer epidemic," with the ozone situation invariably cited. People are expressing concern about lying in the sun, with sunscreen products selling briskly. Some people have started applying sunscreen off the beach too.

7. WHY THE HEATHEN RAGE

Televangelism. If the televangelism establishment is hurting from the Bakker spectacle, it's because the Bakkers have stepped outside the subculture's own rules. Sinners are contrite, and the Bakkers—now armed with Melvin Belli!—had been anything but contrite for some weeks. The winner in all this is about to be Billy Graham, who is planning to speak out and whom the mainstream can embrace as relatively sane.

8. THEY WERE EXPLOITABLE

Vietnam movies. Reports that Vietnam has at last been absorbed into the cultural background are premature. *Gardens of Stone* flopped, *Hanoi Hilton* has raised a political fuss, and there is trouble over how to portray the war in "Tour of Duty," the TV show. By the way, the genre where Vietnam is being absorbed successfully is print science fiction.

9. BIG AS THE RITZ

Fred Astaire. Never mind the dancing, Astaire was virtually unique in another way. In many films, he was an aw shucks, upper-class good guy, a Hollywood contradiction since the Depression. The British rich are OK, but rarely the American rich. A dirty little secret is that postwar Americans approve of the rich and are prepared to identify with them; Astaire movies have been among the few U.S. outlets for such feelings.

10. HISTORIC LEVITTOWN

Suburbs. The perception of American suburbs is undergoing change. No longer merely sterile nowheres, many are now being credited with traditions and characters of their own. This is no longer limited to old trolley suburbs, where genuine preservation battles are going on. Even new towns as little as 20 years old are marketing themselves as places imbued with tradition.

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als will step in and take power away from him.

The Reagan administration has warned Chun against imposing martial law and the military against staging a coup, and has consistently urged that South Korea move toward democracy. The administration's performance earns a B-plus from such usual critics as Democratic Representative Stephen Solarz, one of the leading U.S. promoters of democracy in the Philippines and elsewhere. "Six years ago," Solarz says, "this administration would have publicly endorsed Chun as necessary for the stability and security of the peninsula. Now they realize that the way to ensure both stability and security is through democracy." According to Solarz, there is a danger that continued disorder could lead North Korea to miscalculate and invade, but he thinks that the greatest risk of such disorder lies in denials of progress toward democracy.

The Reagan administration has spoken out forcefully for democracy and civilian rule at the level of assistant secretary of state and below, but not at the level of secretary of state and above. Nor has anything been heard from the U.S. military, which has ties with the South Korean military dating back 35 years. It's important that these voices be heard, not only for their impact on South Korean officials but also because the opposition believes that the United States sides with Chun and the military. Students and other dissidents mistakenly blame the United States for giving permission for the Kwangju massacre, and many mistakenly think that the United States is in a position to simply order the South Korean government to transform itself into a democracy. The Philippine example probably strengthened our reputation for omnipotence. The fact is, we are not omnipotent, but we have powers that we are not using.

The United States cannot and should not try to tell a nearly mature and sovereign ally what kind of democratic government it ought to have. We have no business choosing between the government's preference for a parliamentary system and the opposition's demand for a directly elected president. But we can offer to help mediate the dispute, and we can offer suggestions. One compromise solution might be to hold a direct election after the 1988 Olympics. Another would be for a parliament to be elected on a fairer basis than the government proposal presently contemplates.

The United States is correct to suggest, as both Congress and the administration are doing, that as negotiations resume the South Korean government should prove its good faith by freeing the press, releasing all political prisoners, ending torture, and restoring Kim Dae Jung's political rights. Some members of Congress, led by Senator Edward Kennedy, want to back up these suggestions with threats of trade sanctions. We do not favor that proposal because it comes at a time when Chun is moving toward talks with the opposition, and because we suspect some of Kennedy's co-sponsors are merely looking for an excuse to impose trade restrictions against South Korea. Should the government fail to negotiate in good faith, however, trade is certainly one lever that may be employed.

It will also help for South Korea to worry, as it does, that it could lose the 1988 Olympics if it does not settle its internal problems peacefully. This should not be an incentive for a crackdown solely to establish order, but for negotiations and compromise to establish peace based on internal justice. South Korea got the Olympics because other countries believe it to be a modern nation. We hope the games will also serve to welcome South Korea into the community of democracies, where it belongs.

WHATEVER BERNIE WANTS

Just shy of the 400th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Hobbes, we are still riveted by his account of human motives. But instead of seeing those raw passions that make up the Hobbesian emotional economy as elements of some theoretical precivilized state of nature, we know them as part of a real stranglehold of barbarism on civilized life. In the metropolises of the democratic world, this specter comes not just as an occasional reminder but as the experience of daily existence. Whatever fears people live with in totalitarian societies, the fear of capricious victimization in the streets or the subways is not one of them. But that is the primal fear in the big cities of our society, of which the New York of Bernhard Goetz and his assailants may only be an especially egregious instance.

Goetz's emergence as a folk hero shows how little confidence people have in the state's ability to assure the personal safety of its citizens. Goetz's acquittal by a biracial jury of his peers is no triumph of law and order, but it is a plea for their restoration. Although this is not easily achieved, it need not await elimination of the sociological explanations for crime—a development to be hoped for, but not exactly a practical program.

Poverty, even grinding poverty, does not necessarily mean rampant crime. The persistence of squalor in America—a national disgrace and an urgent agenda item on its own terms—does not explain the rising crime rates of recent decades, a time when millions of Americans have risen economically, socially, educationally, and in their own self-esteem. So there are other factors—a certain widely diffused moral lassitude, a legal system perhaps a bit too exquisitely attuned to the rights of criminals—that have caused our city crime statistics to read like kill ratios from a war zone.

The dread of crime cuts across the races, although it is perhaps more vivid among the racial minorities who are its disproportionate victims and whose sons are its disproportionate perpetrators. Hobbes observed that every man's vulnerability to being killed by another man yields the principle of natural equality. This same vulnerability today, ever more widely shared, also establishes some palpable common ground for polarized racial and ethnic groups, whose politicians, alas, have been more interested in exploiting what divides us. In a remarkable article in the *New York Post*, columnist Eric Breindel has demonstrated how deep is the yearning, perhaps more so among blacks

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than among whites, for sternness against violent crime and violent criminals.

Despite years of worthy gun-control activity, more and more people contemplate acquiring a handgun to protect themselves against criminals. This is the Goetz response. Here and there organized vigilantes have mobilized, doubtless mustering some aggressive macho instincts of their own, to prevent thugs from ruling their neighborhoods. This is a collective version of the Goetz response. After some tense racial confrontations, two such groups in Brooklyn with long histories of reciprocal enmity, one black and one Hassidic, have established a joint enterprise through the mediation of city officials. In its way, it is a promising development. But it is also a terrible confession of civil failure. Public tranquillity should not depend on vigilantes. But the greater reliance on such voluntary forces in our poorer areas, and on what used to be called Pinkertons in our richer ones, is a measure of the disarray in the public sector. This is an especially dangerous form of privatization.

The issue of crime invites demagoguery: cries for the death sentence from some; from others accusation of racism in response to any proposal to deal harshly with criminals. Reflecting on the Goetz case, Russell Baker of the *New York Times* asks why New York City "cannot support a decently civilized subway system as great cities like Paris, London, Toronto, and Moscow manage to do." His answer is that the people who run New York, for whom "a life without a limousine is a life of failure," won't spend the necessary funds, and that's because they "have contempt for subways . . . [which] are for life's losers." Now, there are different reasons that each of those other cities' subways are better and safer than New York's. But money has little to do with it. Baker declares himself ready "to spend the immense sums that would now be necessary to make New York's system perhaps half as good as London's." But it wouldn't. And it also wouldn't prevent those four black young men with criminal records from giving Bernhard Goetz reasonable fear for his safety. This episode is a horrific metaphor for our society. The notion that we can eclipse it by some vast public expenditure is as delusionary as the idea that executing murderers will terrorize criminals into civilization.

NOTEBOOK

□ NO SMOKING GUN: An embarrassed Justice Department announced on June 22 that it is dropping its indictment of General Dynamics for fiddling with the books on the Sergeant York anti-aircraft gun. New evidence convinced prosecutors that no law had been broken. This is a dramatic demonstration of what has been referred to in these pages as TRB's Law of Scandal: the scandal isn't what's illegal, the scandal is what's legal. The Army awarded General Dynamics a $39 million contract to develop a prototype of the Sergeant York. GD had the usual cost overruns and charged $7.5 million to other government accounts. Apparently, though, this *isn't against the law!* GD, it turns out, had what is called a "best efforts" contract, in which it merely promised to use its "best efforts" to meet the price, with no penalty for failure. It also was under no obligation, for $39 million or any greater amount, to produce a finished weapon. (The thing never did work right and was ultimately canceled.) Try getting a contract like that from anyone but the Pentagon.

□ BY ALL ACCOUNTS Charles Glass, the former ABC reporter who was kidnapped in Lebanon last month, is a genial and decent man. We hope that he will soon be rescued from his present agonies. But he was not an unbiased or objective reporter. Glass was a passionate partisan of what he thought to be the Arab cause, allocating his ardors among warring factions he wished were one. There were not only the dexterously skewed dispatches on television but also, somewhat out of American view, more obviously anti-Jewish screeds in the *Spectator* of London. In ABC anchorman Peter Jennings's report the night of the kidnapping, he noted Glass's concern for what he euphemistically called the "disenfranchised." This was perhaps a signal to Glass's captors that they had done a disservice to themselves by holding hostage so important an Arab sympathizer in the American media. Glass, who recently left ABC and returned to Lebanon to research a book, romanticized his subject. He may have felt that he was somehow exempt from Lebanon's furies. In this he was wrong. But still there has been a remarkable effort, since his capture, to get him out. Not since the Syrians cajoled and threatened to secure the release of three kidnapped Soviet personnel (a fourth had been killed) has Damascus expended so much capital in an attempt to get a hostage freed. It is worth noting that Syria has tried to exercise exactly zero leverage in other equally tragic kidnappings of men whose fate is by now virtually forgotten.

□ POLLS APART:

Italians heeding call to vote

—*Boston Globe*, June 15

Italian elections play to sparse house

—*Boston Herald*, same day

(thanks to Robert S. Levine, Brookline, Massachusetts)

□ FOR THE FIRST TIME since the cold war began, the American leadership is outclassed by the Soviet leadership. The most important challenge faced by the next president, Democrat or Republican, will be, simply, Gorbachev. And now comes Professor Stephen Cohen of Princeton, erstwhile Soviet affairs adviser to Gary Hart (and Hart's guide in a visit to Moscow last year), to demonstrate precisely how *not* to respond to that challenge. Speaking last month in Moscow, Cohen announced that "the basic cause of the

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nuclear arms race has been the almost complete militarization of American-Soviet relations." On both sides, to be sure; but what struck Cohen most forcefully was that "American thinking about the Soviet Union . . . is now utterly militarized: as a nation we have lost the ability to think politically about the Soviet Union." And this "has created . . . threats to our well-being and security . . . more grave than any posed by the Soviet Union itself." More than the Soviet Union itself! By contrast, "The New Political Thinking" of Soviet leader Gorbachev is nothing less than "a repudiation of Soviet national security policy and the military buildup under Brezhnev." Cohen is disappointed, however, that "the majority reaction in our own political circles has been negative: indifference, skepticism, and even outright hostility." But for the libidinal incontinence of Gary Hart, the notion that any continuation of hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union are entirely America's fault might well have become the Democratic party line. The other Democratic candidates are said to be snapping up Hart's advisers. Here's one better left unsnapped.

□ SUMMER READING: An Armand Hammer Citation for ludicrous excess in solicited blurbs on the cover of a new book is hereby awarded to *Painted in Blood: Understanding Europeans* by someone named Stuart Miller (Atheneum). The following people, distinguished and otherwise, are alleged to have read the book and found it pleasing: Frances FitzGerald ("an audacious undertaking"); Senator Claiborne Pell ("sage rumination"); Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber ("He could rightly say, 'Tocqueville, here I come' "); David Puttnam ("eliminates the potential for misunderstanding"); Herbert McCloskey ("stunning, delightful, and unique); Carl Rogers ("profound and totally unique"); George Lang ("gets down to the springs of motivation instead of symptoms"); Rollo May ("an excellent book"); Malcolm Forbes ("invaluable . . . for anyone who has Europe on their itinerary"); May Sarton ("nourishing"); and Senator Alan Cranston ("rare").

□ SUMMER READING RELIEF: This is a combined edition. TNR will not publish next week so that readers can catch up on some of those back issues.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BY A THREAD

THE GOOD NEWS for Elliott Abrams, the assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, is that President Reagan watched some of his testimony before the congressional Iran-*contra* committee, and liked it. Reagan thought Abrams had justified everything he'd done, even deceiving the Senate Intelligence Committee last November about whether the administration had solicited funds for the Nicaraguan *contras* from another country. The president was also enthusiastic about Fawn Hall's testimony, but she's not trying to hold on to a high-visibility job in the administration. Abrams is. With the president on his side, he may make it.

But he's not a cinch. The bad news for Abrams is that the senior staff at the White House—at least the part of it identified with chief of staff Howard Baker—hasn't joined the bandwagon. These officials do have some say. After Secretary of State George Shultz issued a ringing declaration of support of Abrams on June 3, Abrams and his allies sought a statement of presidential support. Abrams called Frank Donatelli, the White House political director, who told him to have Shultz call Baker. Shultz did. Baker, in turn, sent word to the presidential party in Venice, where it had just arrived in preparation for the economic summit the next week.

The statement was not as strongly worded as Shultz had requested and Abrams had hoped. Marlin Fitzwater, the president's spokesman, made it sound as if the White House was merely humoring Shultz. "Shultz said he has full confidence in Mr. Abrams and we share the secretary's view," Fitzwater said. OK, but even with such confidence, a reporter said, you might conclude that Abrams ought to quit. "I don't know of any change," Fitzwater said. If the secretary says Abrams is staying, "Well, Secretary Shultz speaks for the administration and whatever he says is fine with us." Shultz didn't think Fitzwater's statement was fine. He complained to the White House about it.

REAGAN, IN PUBLIC, didn't do much better for Abrams. At his press conference in Venice on June 11, he was reminded that Shultz had said Abrams was staying and asked if that was right. "I know the statement that was made by the secretary of state and that is the administration's position," he said. Asked if he was comfortable working with Abrams, Reagan again passed up the chance to hand out a plaudit. "I have told you," he said. "That is the administration's position." Why so tepid? Reagan simply took into account the political argument from some of his senior advisers. You may have to let Abrams go one day soon, so don't go too far now in voicing support for him. "And he didn't," an aide said admiringly. Reagan, in fact, was prepared to put some distance between himself and Abrams. "You shouldn't judge a policy on the basis of an individual," he was primed to say. "It ought to be judged on the merits." But no one asked the right question to go with this answer, and Reagan didn't give his scripted comment.

If he had, the pressure for firing Abrams would have mounted. Instead, the moment of Abrams's greatest vulnerability passed. His foes at the White House still argue that Reagan will have to decide Abrams's fate in late summer or early fall when he pushes for renewal by Congress of military aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*. "That bridge is going to have to be crossed," says a senior offi-

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cial. "Someone is going to have to make a tough decision. Once you start down that road and begin counting votes and you come up X votes short, then you may have to see what you could get" by letting Abrams go. Another official believes that Abrams will loyally fall on his sword, recognizing that the *contra* policy is more important than he is.

That's wishful thinking. "I once said I'll stay as long as my Visa card holds out, and some people misunderstood that," says Abrams. Now he's more blunt. "I'm staying." He's helped enormously by the fact that his detractors inside the administration have a weak argument. Are there really any members of Congress who will vote for *contra* aid solely because Abrams is sacked? "We could fire Elliott and not pick up any votes at all," cautions a White House official. Abrams certainly doesn't think his scalp will bring votes. "I really don't believe there are members of Congress who will base a crucial national security decision on whether they like me or not," he says. If there were enough who would, though, he'd quit. "You get me a petition signed by 51 senators and 218 congressmen to the effect that if I resign they will vote for *contra* aid, and I will proudly present that to the president and receive his congratulations for getting *contra* aid," Abrams says.

ONE OF his sharpest critics on the Iran-*contra* panel, Democratic Senator David Boren of Oklahoma, has already calmed down. On Cable News Network's "Evans and Novak" show on June 20, Boren said he isn't trying to get Abrams fired. "All I'm saying is that at this moment in time when you're trying to get a very controversial policy adopted, I think you should pick someone who's less controversial to be the principal spokesman," said Boren. "I'm not saying he ought to be fired from the State Department." Another critic, Republican Senator William Cohen of Maine, praised Abrams on the same show for giving the Senate Intelligence Committee "as much information as we need" in recent months. "Now, I think that you can believe in the theory of redemption," he added.

Cohen said Shultz has some explaining to do about why he allowed Abrams's misleading testimony to the Intelligence Committee to stand for three weeks last fall. He does. Shultz has every reason to have a guilty conscience, and he seems eager to assuage it by saving Abrams from being a scapegoat. If Abrams stays, he can't be a scapegoat, an administration official said. "You're not a scapegoat if you don't lose." Shultz's support is unwavering, and specific on every charge against Abrams. No, he told Democratic Representative Edward Feighan of Ohio in a letter on June 17, Abrams didn't intend to deceive Congress about administration involvement in the private network supplying the *contras*. He just didn't know the truth, said Shultz. Yes, it's true Abrams didn't learn enough about Col. Oliver North's activities. But Abrams believed what North told him. "Trust among counterparts in various departments is an essential ingredient of government," Shultz wrote. (Actually, the letter was written in Abrams's office, but Shultz signed it.) And so on.

The strangest twist in all this is that while Abrams, the architect of the *contra* policy, was the target of criticism, the administration was growing more optimistic about salvaging the policy. Some White House officials claim with a straight face that the Iran-*contra* hearings have persuaded the American people of the need for *contra* aid. This isn't plausible. But the case for eliminating *contra* aid has lost one of its best arguments, namely that the *contras* won't fight. Jose Sorzano, the Latin American expert on the National Security Council staff, flew over the *contra* camps in Honduras on June 16 and found them practically deserted. Virtually all of the *contras* had moved into Nicaragua, where Abrams and others in the administration believe they are finally making military headway. Thus the administration is considering a request for as much as $150 million in new military aid to the *contras* this fall, up from $105 million. How can they get it? Play on Democratic fears of being blamed for abandoning the *contras* inside Nicaragua.

Following his appearance before the Iran-*contra* committee, Abrams had some shaky days. Democratic Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut said he wouldn't allow Abrams to testify before his Foreign Relations Subcommittee. This prompted Republican Jerry Solomon of New York to announce that he won't let Dodd appear before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on which he's the ranking GOP member. On June 19 Abrams's allies gathered for a dinner at the Hay-Adams Hotel to cheer him up and save his job. The dinner was organized by Daniel Oliver, the chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, and attended by Sorzano, Richard Perle, Becky Norton-Dunlop of the Interior Department, William Kristol of the Education Department, and Ed Feulner, the boss of the Heritage Foundation and a White House consultant, among others. They agreed that Abrams should be made a cause célèbre of the conservative movement in order to put pressure on Reagan to keep him.

WITHIN DAYS Abrams had become a litmus test for conservatives. "Fire him and conservatives will go bananas," says a White House official. Word spread fast at the White House the morning of June 23 about the cheers for Abrams the night before at a dinner in honor of William Casey, the late CIA director. The emcee introduced celebrities at the dinner and asked the audience to hold its clapping until the end. The crowd was silent as Senator Jesse Helms, Energy Secretary John Herrington, and others were introduced. When Abrams was mentioned, wild applause burst out.

At the White House the next day, officials were talking up a strategy under which Abrams would be kept on but a new administration point man would be appointed on the issue of *contra* aid. Frank Carlucci, the national security adviser, has been pushing for such a spokesman since he arrived in January. Abrams, after all, was a con-

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troversial figure then too. "He'd been hurt before his testimony [at the Iran-*contra* hearings]," says a White House official who is no Abrams fan. But fire him now? Not likely.

FRED BARNES

Our universities are the world's best.

HIGHEST EDUCATION

IN THESE DAYS when foreign economic rivals seem to be surpassing us in one field after another, it may be reassuring to know that there is one vital industry where America unquestionably dominates the world: higher education. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of the world's best universities are located in the United States. This fact has been ignored by the many recent critics of higher education in America. (We also are home to a large share of the world's worst colleges and universities, but that is beside the point.)

What other sector of our economy can make a similar statement? There are baseball, football, and basketball teams—but that pretty much exhausts the list. No one has suggested that today America is home to two-thirds of the best steel mills, automobile factories, chip manufacturers, banks, or government agencies. Our position at the upper end of the quality scale in higher education is unusual, may be a special national asset, and needs to be explained.

By two-thirds (perhaps three-quarters) of the best I mean that surveys of world universities rank American public and private institutions at the top. A recent exercise by Asian scholars, published in the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, produced the following rankings: 1. Harvard; 2. Cambridge/Oxford; 3. Stanford; 4. Berkeley; 5. MIT; 6. Yale; 7. Tokyo; 8. Paris-Sorbonne; 9. Cornell; 10. Michigan, Princeton. I attach no real importance to individual rank order. What does have validity, I think, is the group as a whole. And I believe that if this list were expanded to 20 or 30 institutions, the U.S. proportion would not decline. Columbia, Chicago, UCLA, Cal Tech, Wisconsin, and many others would find little competition abroad. Note also that the list contains a couple of dubious entries: Tokyo and the Sorbonne are probably mentioned among the top ten as a consequence of excessive Oriental courtesy.

Some may argue that the very notion of rankings or "the best" is invidious, crude, and meaningless. I do not share that view if we adopt a sufficiently broad interpretation of these terms. The universities we are considering lead the world in basic science research. They provide a significant share of the most competitive graduate programs. They are generally at the cutting edge—rather blunt these days—of the social sciences. Students from all over the world, at all levels, seek entry in large numbers.

Why this happy result? Our national wealth, large population, government support especially of science have to be significant explanatory factors. The constructive influence of Hitler refugees undoubtedly was important in setting new standards of quality beginning in the 1930s. The American habit of private philanthropy remains crucial. These are influential factors, but in my opinion there are less obvious and perhaps more important considerations.

An unusual characteristic of American university life is its competitiveness. Institutions of the same class compete for faculty, research funds, students, public attention—and much else. That Harvard and Stanford, for example, actively recruit and compete for students—undergraduate, graduate, and professional—is quite incomprehensible to establishments such as Tokyo or Kyoto universities, where an entrance examination determines all. It is almost equally unusual in most parts of the world for one institution to hire professors away from another by offering a higher salary and/or better working conditions. In Japan, and to a lesser extent elsewhere, universities hire almost exclusively their own graduates. Inbreeding is rampant—a sharp contrast with most departments in top American universities.

Institutional competitiveness has some negative consequences—particularly if your university loses too many encounters with the market. The dark side includes too much movement by professorial stars from one university to another in relentless pursuit of personal gain, and a consequently lower level of institutional loyalty. Competition also leads to invidious comparisons among fields of study, with excessive advantages within the university going to those subjects where "market power" is strong (computer sciences, yes; English, no). Not least, competition can lead to a Wall Street-like mentality that focuses too much on short-term highly visible achievements at the expense of the long run and the unfashionable.

However, the benefits of American-style competition among universities outweigh the costs. It has prevented complacency and spurred the drive for excellence and change. Christopher Rathbone wrote in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in 1980: ". . . Oxford is not obliged to compete. There are no challengers perpetually ready to depose Oxford from its pre-eminent position. . . . Oxford . . . unlike its American counterparts is not out to prove itself. . . . This lends self-composure and dignity." These sentiments apply as well to Tokyo, Paris, and Cambridge, and they cannot describe *any* American university. We may lack self-composure and dignity; but we do achieve higher quality at the top.

AMERICAN PRACTICES also differ in the selection of faculty for "permanent employment," or tenure. Despite the ubiquity of security of employment in our society, faculty tenure at universities seems to be an inordinately vexing subject. Critics complain that teaching

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ability is ignored and that deadwood is encouraged to remain in place for many years. Without discussing these criticisms—and I do *not* agree with them—this much is clear: in our leading universities, the granting of tenure is taken with utmost seriousness. It is not merely a question of time. Tenure is awarded only after a long period of probationary service (usually eight years), and extensive inside and outside peer review; it is a highly competitive selection process. At Harvard we ask a traditional question: Who is the most qualified person in the world to fill a particular vacancy? and then we try to convince that scholar to join our ranks. We may reach the wrong conclusion, and we may not succeed in attracting our first or even second choice, but our goal is elevated. Details may differ, but in essence the process of achieving tenure is the same in our leading institutions—those that are included in two-thirds of the best. All of these schools correctly assume that the quality of the faculty is the most important factor in maintaining their reputation and position. The best faculty attracts the finest students, produces the highest quality research, gains the most outside support, etc.

It is not easy to generalize about practices everywhere else, but probationary periods are likely to be far shorter, there is less reliance on outside evaluations, and, of course, there is much inbreeding. Teachers and researchers can attain permanent status at low ranks—as lecturers and assistants—and may never attain senior status if their performance is mediocre. But these individuals remain in place for all too many years, which affects both atmosphere and average quality. Our American policy of "up or out" is rarely practiced elsewhere.

GOVERNANCE IS another area in which American universities are unusual. The uniquely large role of private higher education is a major factor, but not the entire explanation. Public and private university governance in this country are quite similar, and differ in an important respect from what might be called the "continental model."

The American system is unitary. Ultimately one person—a president—is in charge. Typically, educational policy—curriculum, nature of degrees, selection of faculty, admissions, etc.—is initiated by or delegated to academics. But budgets, management of endowment, decisions on new programs, long-range plans, and similar matters are in the hands of a hierarchy headed by a president who is responsible to a board of trustees.

Two elements in this system are noteworthy. First, chairmen, deans, provosts, and similar levels of senior and middle management are appointed, not elected, and they can be dismissed. This is crucial because academic elections tend to result in weak leadership. What professors in their right minds would vote for a dean who advocated cuts in *their* departments? Second, relatively independent trustees serve both public and private schools, giving considerable protection from political interference even to state universities. We have a system of governance that permits nonconsensual and unpopular decisions to be made when necessary. We have learned that not everything is improved by making it more democratic. We also have learned that university governance functions best when conflict of interest is minimized.

There is no one pattern of university administration in the rest of the world, of course. But more often than not universities are state-run, under the direction of a ministry of education or some form of national grants committee disbursing government funds. Professors tend to be civil servants subject to many bureaucratic regulations; logrolling all too easily replaces competition. An elected administration—another common feature—ensures that leadership is weak: those who are strong and espouse change are unlikely to be popular favorites.

During the last 20 years, a form of democratization known as "parity" has become common in parts of Europe: decisions concerning universities are made by a board with an equal representation of students, staff, and faculty. In Holland, for example, the consequence has been an assault on the very notion of excellence in higher education. Professor Isaac Silvera, who taught physics at Amsterdam for many years, wrote recently: "The primary function of a university is teaching and research, but what seemed paramount in the Dutch system was to create a democratically structured institute with organization and rules that would promote the social contentment of the employees and students; only then would attention be focused on education and research." And Nobel laureate Nicholaas Bloembergen added mordantly: "In a few years . . . the Dutch will even be unhappy if their soccer team wins the World Cup—that would imply excellence."

I SUSPECT ANOTHER factor can help to explain why America is home to a disproportionate share of the world's finest universities: regional pride. It may exist elsewhere in the world, but not nearly to the same degree. Many of our best institutions—public and private—are clear expressions of local patriotism. The University of California, Stanford, Texas, and Duke are just a few of the obvious examples. In our large and decentralized country, each region wants its share of the best, and sometimes these ambitions are fulfilled. In less than a hundred years, with the help of a growing population and tax base, great local ambition, new wealth, and a wonderful climate, the state of California has created an astonishing number of universities with international reputations. And all are far removed from the traditional cultural centers of the Northeast. In America the pre-emptive power of Paris, Tokyo, or pre-war Berlin simply does not exist—thank goodness.

In higher education, "made in America" still is the finest label. My only advice is to add "handle with care," lest we too descend to the level of most other American industrial performance.

HENRY ROSOVSKY

Henry Rosovsky, former dean of the faculty of arts and sciences at Harvard, is an economist specializing in Japan.

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Iranamok's wayward officers.

THE COLONELS' COUP

ROBERT MCFARLANE, John Poindexter, Oliver North, Richard Secord, Robert Dutton, and John Singlaub. What do they have in common? They were all major players in the secret Reagan administration foreign policy that became the Iranamok scandal. And they are all career military men. One element of the scandal that has gone unremarked so far is the erosion, under Reagan, of civilian control of foreign and military policy.

This administration has placed more military officers in non-military positions than any other in the postwar period. Nixon had Alexander Haig, Ford had Brent Scowcroft, and Carter had Stansfield Turner. In the last six years Reagan has had an ex-general as secretary of state, an ex-colonel and then a vice admiral as national security adviser, and several less conspicuous presidential aides who came directly from the services. The White House and the National Security Council routinely draw aides from the military services, as well as the CIA, the State Department, universities, and the private sector. By last December, however, one-third of the NSC staff—17 of 50—came from the Pentagon alone. This is double the military representation when Reagan took office.

Iranamok was run from start to finish by career military personnel. The arms sales to Iran began under the supervision of ex-Col. Robert McFarlane. Shortly afterward he resigned, and Lt. Col. Oliver North and Vice Adm. John Poindexter implemented this policy and its *contra* connection. Both men relied heavily on other officers. Poindexter consulted regularly with a group of active and retired Navy men, some of whom managed his staff as well. At one point ten NSC staff members, 20 percent of the total, were from the Navy alone, filling such important positions as the executive secretary, the defense policy coordinator, and the legal adviser.

Military officers are routinely required to leave the NSC after a two-year stint. North was scheduled to return to the Marine Corps in 1984, but McFarlane made special requests to extend his term for two successive years. Poindexter and North benefited greatly from the high turnover rate at the NSC, an acute problem in the Reagan administration (which has had as many national security advisers as the preceding five administrations put together). They became the council's institutional memory, and North the only staff member with long-term contacts in other agencies and foreign countries. When North's immediate boss, Director of Political-Military Affairs Donald Fortier, left office due to illness, Poindexter instructed Howard Teicher, the new director, that Colonel North did not fall under Teicher's authority. Ollie was now on his own.

By this time North had assembled his Iranamok team. His two immediate assistants were Lt. Col. Robert Earl and Cmdr. Craig Coy. Outside support included retired generals Secord, Dutton, and Singlaub. Other than the international arms dealers and financiers and, initially, consultant Michael Ledeen (and leaving aside the operational role of the CIA), the planning and execution of this policy did not involve a civilian in any significant position.

Civilian control of national security policy is important for obvious reasons of democratic principle. But Iranamok demonstrates its practical value as well. Military men are not trained to make foreign policy. Most of the military officers who go to the NSC don't even have policy-making experience in their own services. Most are colonels, and almost none are above the rank of one-star general. Yet when they arrive at the NSC they find themselves formulating and implementing policy at the highest level of the U.S. government.

These men in uniform did not understand politics. They didn't understand politics in Iran, where they thought their strange deal could stay secret in the cutthroat world of mullahs, terrorists, and international arms dealers. They didn't understand politics in Nicaragua, where they thought the *contras* could triumph militarily without developing a political base of support. Most of all, they didn't understand politics in the United States. By contriving to exclude the senior foreign policy officials of their own administration—their bosses—North and Company ensured that the program would be insufficiently considered, and would lack support in and out of the bureaucracy. By excluding Congress they built in a time bomb.

THIS IS NOT to suggest that all military officers are incipient fascists. But there *is* a "military way of thinking" that is rooted in the fact that since the early 1800s the military has been a profession with its own specialized education, training, and experience, even more so than law or medicine. It is an intelligent and professional way of thinking, and is well suited to its job—"the management of violence," as Harold Laswell described it. This way of thinking is not well suited, however, to the management of foreign policy.

Of course there are some remarkable military men who have become successful civilian leaders, such as Dwight Eisenhower and George Marshall. (Personal qualities aside, both these men had policy-making experience because of their high rank.) And of course there will always be a need for military participation in policy-making at the staff level. The problem in the Reagan administration was not the mere presence of military men, but rather their disproportionate representation—both in the NSC in general and in the "enterprise"—the lack of supervision, and the extraordinary power they were given.

FAREED ZAKARIA

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A catalog of whoppers.

THE CULTURE OF LYING

BY MARK HOSENBALL

RONALD REAGAN has told so many different stories about Iranamok that even he must realize that everything he has said cannot be true. First he said he never "swapped boatloads or planeloads of American weapons" with Iran for the return of American hostages in Lebanon. Then he didn't remember when he authorized one of the arms shipments. Then he acknowledged that his administration's dealings with Tehran might have degenerated into an arms-for-hostages swap. And finally there was the matter of Oliver North's schemes to raise private funds for the *contras*. For months Reagan pleaded ignorance about how the *contras* were sustained. "I had little knowledge," he claimed in early May. But following the testimony of Robert McFarlane and lesser players the president suddenly said: "I've known what's going on there, as a matter of fact, for quite a long time now, a matter of years. It was my idea."

The president's twists and turns on Iran and the *contras* have strained his credibility. He is in good company: several of his recent predecessors also had problems convincing the public they were telling the truth. Past presidents lied for a variety of motives. Lyndon Johnson lied about his plans for expanding the Vietnam War because his political experience taught him that lying was expedient. Richard Nixon lied about his involvement in Watergate because deceit was instinctive. Jimmy Carter said he would never lie, and then, out of desperation, implicitly fibbed about his intention to carry out the Desert One hostage rescue mission. Unlike Johnson, Nixon, or Carter, however, Ronald Reagan is neither devious, cynical, nor desperate. Instead, the evidence suggests that, when he is not genuinely mixed up about the facts, Reagan fibs because he is convinced by his own propaganda. His advisers then have followed his lead, but for an assortment of motives, including self-righteousness, fanaticism, and convenience.

In a world populated by devious and determined adversaries, a certain amount of deception in American military planning and diplomacy may be excusable, if not necessary. But in a democracy, such tactics should be used sparingly, and only when they advance policies favored by the public, or at least by its elected representatives. It is ironic that the Reagan administration turned to lying to promote what it believed was the Cause of Freedom, because one of its central propaganda themes is that a principal Threat to Freedom is the "disinformation" apparatus of the Russian KGB, whom Reaganites have blamed for much domestic criticism of their policies. Now the Reagan administration has employed its own disinformation techniques to mislead its citizens about policies it evidently believed they were too stupid or naive to appreciate.

In the book *Lying* (1978), Sissela Bok described the most common political or diplomatic dissimulations as "noble lies" or "lies in a crisis." Outside the minds of the Reagan administration's most zealous operatives, their lies would fit neatly into neither of these categories. Instead, the lies of President Reagan and his aides and hangers-on appear to have created their own genres of deception, from which, like Don Giovanni's faithful servant, one might compile an ever-expanding catalog:

The Outrageous Lie. This is a cousin to the Big Lie, the kind of massively false propaganda that Hitler and the Soviet Communists used to justify their most horrendous crimes. Big Liars try to convince their audience of the truth of their lies by repeating them frequently and vehemently, thereby smothering the truth in a blanket of falsehood. The principal difference between the Big Lie and the Outrageous Lie is that the latter is far more transparent and its authors are far less vehement. Neither the liar nor the lie-ee is ever convinced by the Outrageous Lie. Eventually it collapses under the weight of its own manifest falsehood.

The best-preserved examples of Outrageous Lies to emerge so far in Iranamok are contained in a set of 1985 correspondence between Robert McFarlane, then White House national security adviser, and assorted leading Democrats in Congress. In a September 12 letter to Congressman Michael Barnes of Maryland, McFarlane asserted that nobody on his staff, including Oliver North, "has solicited funds, facilitated contacts for prospective potential donors, or otherwise organized or coordinated the military or paramilitary efforts of the [Nicaraguan] resistance." On October 5 McFarlane told House Intelligence Committee Chairman Lee Hamilton in writing that North had not been the NSC's contact man with private *contra* fund-raisers, that he never advised private donors on how to give money to the *contras*, and that he never used his influence to "facilitate the movement of supplies to the resistance."

Congress had only asked these questions after specific allegations about North's activities appeared in such organs as the *New York Times*. It is unlikely that administration critics really believed McFarlane's answers at the time, even though they were quite emphatic and categorical. Testimony by McFarlane and others now has established beyond doubt that they also were simply untrue. McFarlane subsequently expressed some remorse for his deceit, which re-

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moves his statements from the category of Big Lies.

The Crafty Lie. The object here is to make it as difficult as possible for your adversaries to accuse you of lying. Administration officials have demonstrated at least two methods of constructing Crafty Lies. One is to make such vague, evasive, or confusing statements that nobody can figure out what you're saying in the first place; therefore it becomes impossible to pin down contradictions in your story. Another is to insist that you are telling the truth even after your misstatements have been exposed.

Perhaps the most skilled practitioner of the first technique was William Casey, the late CIA chief. For a start, Casey habitually avoided on-the-record statements. This made it difficult to find out *anything* he was saying, never mind whether or not it was the truth. When he did speak publicly, his pronouncements were models of imprecision. In one of the few comments he did make as Iranamok began to leak, Casey labeled as "tenuous speculation" the suggestion that Iran arms profits had been diverted to the *contras*. It later emerged that Casey had been alerted to the diversion by a former business associate several weeks before Attorney General Ed Meese made the story public. When Congress finally started to ask pointed questions about arms shipments to Iran, Casey proposed telling the Senate Intelligence Committee that one of the American arms shipments to Iran was not an arms shipment at all, but a load of oil-drilling equipment. After studying his actual testimony (which was slightly more candid), the Tower Commission concluded that Casey "did not fully relate the nature of events as they had occurred." According to the Tower board, Casey's ostensible reason for misleading Congress was that he didn't want to compromise classified information. In the Reagan administration, this excuse has overtaken patriotism as the last refuge of the scoundrel.

Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams favored the alternative approach to Crafty Lies. He made various emphatic public statements that later were contradicted by overwhelming evidence or his own recantations. Then he tried, and to some extent succeeded, in excusing the discrepancies in his story through assertive sophistry. When a *contra* supply plane manned by Americans crashed inside Nicaragua last fall, Abrams said on television that there was "absolutely" no American government connection to the plane. The aircraft has now been firmly linked to Ollie North's *contra* resupply "enterprise." Abrams told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last October that while he had been head of the State Department's Latin America bureau, the United States had "not received a dime from a foreign government" to support the *contras*; he later acknowledged that he had helped to solicit a $10 million *contra* donation from the government of Brunei. Abrams's explanations for these contradictions were that he had gone out of his way to avoid learning too much about Ollie North's *contra* resupply effort, and that he was technically correct in saying the United States had not *received* foreign *contra* money because the $10 million he solicited got lost.

The Muddled Lie. The mentality that led key organizers of Iranamok to propagate Outrageous and Crafty Lies appears to have given officials who were less involved in the affair license to be careless with their accounts of the facts. Progenitors of Muddled Lies maintain that their stories are confused rather than false, even though they are not true. It is relatively easy to tell Muddled Lies from good faith misunderstandings: the latter are rare and embarrassing; the former appear in patterns and tend to flatter their authors, or, to use a McFarlane word, "gild" their public images.

President Reagan's confusing accounts of his arms-for-hostages dealings with Khomeini appear to fall into this category, although his contradictory assertions about his knowledge of the *contra* operation may fall into categories above or below. Vice President Bush's office was another productive source of Muddled Lies. First his national security adviser, Donald Gregg, said he and his staff never discussed the *contra* resupply program with Felix Rodriguez, the ex-CIA informant who ran the program in El Salvador. Then Gregg said he and his staff never discussed the operation with Rodriguez before August 8, 1986. Last December Bush's office published a chronology making "full disclosure" of his advisers' meetings with Rodriguez. But the vice president's office then had to issue two amendments adding more meetings to the chronology.

Secretary of State George Shultz has gone to almost desperate lengths to dissociate himself from Iranamok, and occasionally seems to have turned to Muddled Lies to bolster his case in public. Repeatedly he insisted he was kept almost totally in the dark about the Iran arms shipments. Shultz told Congress last December that he had the impression that proposed arms sales to Iran had never been consummated. But the Tower Commission reported that McFarlane and other officials had informed him in detail in 1985 about Israeli plans to deliver American weapons to Khomeini in return for the release of U.S. hostages.

The Patriotic Lie. This is the most nauseating variety of falsehood to emerge from Iranamok. Patriotic Lies differ from Outrageous Lies in several respects. First, Patriotic Liars are sometimes so zealous that they are convinced by their own lies. If they do recognize they are lying, they believe that their dissimulation is justified in a worthy cause. Even when their lies are unmasked, they sometimes still believe they are telling the truth. Despite the fact that Patriotic Lies are rooted in sincere conviction rather than cynicism, they tend to be calculated rather than casual, but also transparent rather than opaque.

Second, Patriotic Liars often lie with pride and gusto. Last August Ollie North was asked by the House Intelligence Committee about his involvement in *contra* resupply efforts. He said he had only talked with the *contras* about political strategy, and never gave them military advice. He also denied working closely with Gen. John Singlaub or Rob Owen to help the *contras*. After this testimony, all of which is now shown to be untrue, national security adviser John Poindexter sent him a message saying, "Well Done."

Ollie North's motives for lying were explained by the Iranamok personality who perhaps knew him best: his secretary, the demure Fawn Hall. "Sometimes you just have to go above the written law," she said, explaining

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why North asked her to doctor several documents about the *contra* supply operation. Hall herself told one of the least convincing Patriotic Lies to emerge so far. When asked whether the fact that North was having her shred documents led her to believe that he had something to cover up, she tartly replied: "I don't use the word 'cover up.' I would use the word 'protect.' "

Although these appear so far to be the most significant varieties of lies told by administration personalities, further categories may suggest themselves as Iranamok stumbles on. It should be noted that the foregoing account entirely omits the behavior and statements of Iranamok players who were not part of the administration, such as the retired military officers, defrocked spies, and international "businessmen" who actually executed the National Security Council's designs.

If members of private Iranamok enterprises were made eligible for inclusion, additional categories would readily suggest themselves. Gen. Richard "Porsche" Secord, who probably would wish us to believe he was lying patriotically if we conclude he has been lying, may merit a category for Foolish Lies. These are emphatic assertions that are self-serving and easily disproved. Secord claimed, for example, in a threatening letter he sent to Random House, that when he testified at the trial of renegade CIA agent Ed Wilson he only appeared "out of the presence of the jury"; had he appeared before the jury, he would have challenged Wilson's principal defense argument. The transcript of Secord's testimony shows that he did testify before the jury and did not challenge Wilson's line of defense.

Then there is the extraordinary figure of Manucher Ghorbanifar, self-described businessman, free-lance dealmaker and spy, and all-purpose Iranamok intermediary. Ghorbanifar elevated lying to virtuoso standard, failing several CIA lie detector tests yet retaining the confidence of administration operatives. In one polygraph examination, shortly after Reagan signed the intelligence "finding" that made arms for hostages official administration policy, the examiner concluded that Ghorbanifar was not being truthful in answers to 13 out of 15 key questions. "This is a guy who lies with zest," said the chief of the CIA's Middle East desk. Nonetheless, the administration continued for months to employ Ghorbanifar as its principal link-man to Tehran.

Next to Ghorbanifar the president and his advisers mercifully appear to be relative amateurs in the art of deception. Nonetheless, the trail of official lies in Iranamok is long and wide. The present uproar ought to remind politicians that, just like a marriage, a policy built of lies and liars is bound to fall apart. But that is probably wishful thinking, since the current administration clearly learned little from the experience of its predecessors.

Capital punishment in South Africa. It's not all that different.

ON DEATH ROW IN PRETORIA CENTRAL

BY DAVID BRUCK

IN A MODERN prison set among the arid hills that lie just outside South Africa's capital city of Pretoria, about 250 prisoners are waiting to be hanged. They include a handful of white and Indian prisoners, housed apart from the black and mixed-race majority. If past practice holds, State President P. W. Botha will eventually spare about half the white prisoners and a few of the blacks by commuting their sentences to terms of imprisonment. Several more death sentences will be overturned by the one appeals court that reviews the cases of the condemned. The rest will be hanged on the gallows of Pretoria Central Prison. On an average week, there will be three such hangings, but the gallows at Central will accommodate seven people at a time, and such multiple executions are common.

The death penalty in South Africa is not political. That is, it's very rarely used for politically motivated crimes, such as assassinations or "necklacings." Of more than 1,200 South Africans hanged at Pretoria Central Prison in the past decade, fewer than ten had committed crimes involving opposition to the apartheid regime. The other 99 percent were violent street criminals. Most of these were convicted of shooting, stabbing, or beating others to death for money. Smaller numbers are hanged each year for aggravated rapes and other violent crimes.

So South Africa's death sentencing system cannot be explained away as simply a peculiarity of the apartheid system. Rather, it is part of the day-to-day functioning of government in South Africa—the part that, like governments everywhere, delivers the mail, keeps the trains running, and tries to control violent crime.

No other country with a Western judicial system uses the death penalty as a routine crime-control measure on the scale that South Africa does. The United States is on its way to becoming second. There are now more than

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1,900 condemned prisoners on the death rows of 32 American states. Two months ago the Supreme Court removed the last major legal obstacle to full-scale resumption of executions when it ruled 5-4 that Georgia could electrocute convicted murderers despite statistical evidence of large racial disparities in death sentencing. At current sentencing rates, it will take an execution a day, including Sundays and holidays, to eliminate our backlog of death-sentenced prisoners before the year 2000. (At half that pace the death row population will continue to grow rather than diminish.)

What will that be like? No other Western industrial democracy inflicts death as punishment. So if we want to know what the death penalty looks like when it is operating at full throttle within a Western legal system, South Africa is, for all its peculiarities, the only country we can look to.

I am a lawyer in South Carolina. Most of my work involves representing prisoners on death row. Just before the imposition of the current emergency decrees last year, I went to South Africa to see what a functioning death-sentencing system looks like, how it works, and what, if need be, we can learn from it.

THE CONDEMNED cell blocks of Pretoria Central are among the secret places of South Africa. The press and the public are not permitted to see them, and prison authorities even monitor lawyers' conversations with their condemned clients to ensure that only strictly legal matters are discussed. Like most official pronouncements in South Africa, the snippets of information about executions released by the authorities convey an air of dispassionate efficiency. A typical South African newspaper story is buried on the inside pages under a heading like "SIX HANGED AT PRETORIA CENTRAL," and consists of little more than the names and offenses of the executed prisoners.

As a result, almost all descriptions of South Africa's death row come from political prisoners who have been held at Pretoria Central along with the Condemneds. Here is how the Afrikaner poet Breyten Breytenbach describes the sounds of death row during the late 1970s in his prison memoir, *Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*:

> I remember the ritual preparations, the singing of those in "the pot" [the holding cell near the gallows], the final leave-taking a day before when the weeping and wailing of the mothers and the wives reverberated through the sections, surmounting even those high barriers which separated the bereaved from the doomed, and how the Black "condemns" would regroup in the corridor after those last visits to return singing to "the pot," the cell of the condemned ones, stamping their feet, rattling their chains, and raising their voices in a rhythm of life and sorrow . . .

These executions occurred ten years ago. Identical descriptions had filtered out from Pretoria Central ten years before that, and so far as we know, little has changed. When political prisoner Renfrew Christie was released by the Pretoria government last December, he described how for years he had heard "the regular weekly sounds of the trapdoor slamming and the coffins being nailed up," and related how "the
times for three days and
victims cope with the terror.

Occasionally word gets out that
according to plan. In July 1981 prison offi
guards had to use tear gas to "calm down" four
men who had refused to walk from their cell to the ga
The men were hanged on schedule, but the news of the
gassing produced protests from liberal political and church leaders, some of whom advanced reform proposals to abolish group hangings and require the authorities to carry out executions one at a time.

There is very little sustained opposition to use of the death penalty for convicted criminals among either black or white South Africans. Supporters of the present regime embrace it with enthusiasm, and opponents rarely mention it as something that can or should be changed. In the crime-ravaged black townships, the treatment of criminals doesn't rank high on the list of anyone's concerns. The day-to-day experience of black South Africans is not of judicial harshness but excessive leniency in the treatment of criminals who victimize black communities: one black magistrate in the vast Umlazi township near Durban told me bitterly that the sentence for killing a man is likely to be less than for poaching an antelope. Robbery and murder plague the residents of the segregated townships and the overcrowded and barren rural reserves. There seems little hope of political change that might open a way to a reduction of crime.

MEANWHILE, the number of executions is going up. In the 1940s, when Alan Paton wrote his classic novel of interracial murder and punishment, *Cry the Beloved Country*, South African authorities were carrying out only about 20 hangings per year. But after decades of fluctuation, executions have been rising more or less steadily during the turbulent years since the Soweto student uprising of 1976, and in 1985 they reached a record high of 137, a total that does not include additional executions in the so-called independent homelands.

One-hundred thirty-seven executions, for a country of only 27 million, is a lot: proportionate to population, it's equivalent to well over 1,000 executions a year in the United States. But in another sense, those 137 hangings are very few. South Africa has one of the highest rates of homicide in the world: in 1985 South Africa's officially recorded murder rate was more than three times that of the United States. So those 137 hanged men were drawn from a huge number of potential candidates. In a typical year, only one out of 50 South African homicides leads to a death sentence—a death-sentencing rate roughly comparable to that of many American states. The outcome of the usual capital trial is a prison term, not death, and those who administer the system see themselves as, in the main, dispensers of mercy.

Still, given the large number of actual executions, I half expected, when I arrived in South Africa, to encounter a judicial system that processed capital cases and defendants

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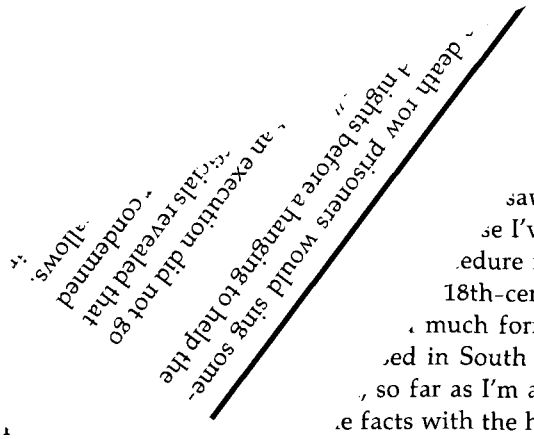

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assi. crials that I observed, both the
judge a. seemed to follow the testimony
with care, p. in the questioning of witnesses and
constantly taki. .es on the testimony. There were regular tea breaks and court adjourned by 4 o'clock each day. More often than not, the tempo of the proceedings was slowed further by the fact that every question and answer had to await translation between English or Afrikaans and the African language of the witness or the accused.

The formality is pervasive. During a recess in the trial of two Indians and two blacks accused of the brutal murder of a farm laborer near Durban, I asked a young Indian woman with a small baby how the trial seemed to be going. Badly, she said. "The advocate says that there is no hope for No. 4 Accused. All the witnesses say that he killed the deceased." Was "No. 4 Accused" a relative of hers? Yes, he was. What relative? "He is my husband." The baby in her arms was born two weeks before his arrest.

No. 4 Accused was indeed lost, the judge informed me over tea in his chambers later that day. The judge is a liberal, cultivated man, active in South Africa's fledgling prison-reform movement and personally opposed to the death penalty. But the death sentence is mandatory for murder under South African law unless some "extenuating circumstance" is present. And so far as No. 4 Accused was concerned—an ex-policeman who had apparently been the prime mover in the killing—the judge could detect no extenuation in the testimony so far.

Nor did any emerge during the remainder of the trial. The defendant's young and inexperienced court-appointed lawyer told me that the death sentence was inevitable, and his own estimation of the case was obvious from his unfocused and lackadaisical presentation to the court. Just before judgment was announced, a newspaperman in the courtroom tapped my arm and indicated a elderly, heavyset man who had just entered and was sitting grim-faced behind the prisoners' dock. That was the deputy sheriff, and his arrival portended death: his job was to escort prisoners to the Condemned cells at Pretoria Central.

The sentence itself came in the form of a detailed judgment announced from the bench, one of several that the judge must hand down in the course of a murder trial. Readers of *Cry the Beloved Country* will recall such a judgment, in which the judge carefully explains his reasoning and conclusions about the case, and why he arrived at the verdict and sentence. These detailed decisions seemed to me far less summary and arbitrary than the unexplained one-sentence verdicts of American juries, and they leave an often elaborate record of how each death verdict was reached.

No. 4 Accused, along with the other three prisoners (these last sentenced to prison terms), disappeared from the dock in the elegant colonial courtroom into a subterranean holding area. As his wife shrieked and sobbed outside the courthouse, the condemned man was whisked away to Pretoria Central, some 400 miles inland.

His appointed lawyer would probably never see him again. If the lawyer requested permission to appeal, and if the judge granted it (such permission is frequently denied), there would be one appeal, to the Appellate Division of the South African Supreme Court. If no appeal was allowed, or if the Appellate Division affirmed the judgment and sentence, his case would be over.

At that stage, officials of the Ministry of Justice would review the trial record to determine whether to recommend that the state president grant clemency. The state president, acting on these recommendations, commutes anywhere from 15 percent to 40 percent of the death sentences imposed by the courts each year, usually to a term of imprisonment of around 15 to 20 years.

IN THE United States, governors rarely grant clemency in capital cases. In South Africa, the commutation process is central to the scheme. The Durban judge who sentenced No. 4 Accused to hang told me that, on occasion, he had even imposed death sentences merely to frighten local criminals, while fully intending to write to the Ministry of Justice to recommend clemency. He didn't know whether these death sentences had actually been commuted. He felt sure they had been, but he'd never inquired. (If he had, he might have been surprised. The judge had informed me that the state president commutes about 80 percent of the death sentences every year, but the actual commutation rate last year was just 15 percent, less than a fifth of what he believed.)

"I've no idea how many death sentences I've imposed," Justice Kriek of the Natal Supreme Court told me in his Durban chambers while he waited for the police to bring an accused murderer to court for the start of his trial. He'd handed down as many as seven in one month, but he supposed his average to be about two per year. "One gets accustomed to the fact that one has to do one's duty as one sees it. One has to be satisfied 100 percent not only that [the accused] did it, but that he deserves the death sentence, morally as well as legally. It's not an easy thing to do. I don't lay awake nights about it. I try to not think about it too much."

He handed me an appeals court decision he'd just received upholding the death sentences he'd imposed on two African National Congress guerrillas for killing a suspected informant. According to the appellate court's order, the men had testified that they had joined the ANC because

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they "wanted to contribute toward the struggle of the people to live well and be legally equally treated." Justice Kriek hadn't sentenced them to death lightly, he said. But they deserved it. "Not on the basis of the ANC being involved, not because it was political, but because it was a cold-blooded killing." Political motivation is not, of course, a legal extenuating circumstance for a homicide under South African law. The two men, Clarence Lucky Payi and Sipho Zulu, were hanged with four others at Pretoria Central on September 9, 1986.

I put the same questions to Justice John Milne, the chief judge (or "judge president") of the Natal Supreme Court, of which Justice Kriek is a member. He too had sent men to the gallows, and the memory troubled him. He thought that the death penalty should be abolished. It had never been proved to be an effective deterrent to crime, he said, and "to my mind it's a terribly serious criticism that if it's found out that a man has been hanged in error, you can't put it right." Then he added, "The mechanics of it are particularly repellent to me. The notion that you take a man in cold blood and take his life. I concede that that's an emotional feeling. But I hold to it."

Justice John Didcott, another judge of the Natal Supreme Court, was even more vehement in his repudiation of the death sentence. Didcott is the most outspoken and well known of a small group of liberal South African judges who have regularly struck down repressive measures of the Pretoria regime. He is also firmly committed to the abolition of capital punishment, and told me that he was "devastated" by its reinstitution in the United States. The resumption of executions here, he felt, had "set back the cause of abolition in the rest of the world by 20 or 30 years." Anyone who believes that hangings actually reduce South Africa's appallingly high murder rate "probably believes in the tooth fairy too." The crime rate, Didcott insisted, is a function of social conditions, and because the kinds of conditions that breed high rates of crime in the inner cities of Detroit, Chicago, and Harlem are so widespread in the segregated townships of South Africa's cities, it shouldn't surprise anyone that their inhabitants murder and are murdered at such high rates.

These views were echoed by Gladys Sibeko, a black social worker and regional director of the South African National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders, the country's one private organization devoted to assisting prisoners and ex-offenders. A high crime rate is to be expected in any urbanizing country such as South Africa, but there, Sibeko emphasized, every problem is intensified by the systematic social destructiveness of apartheid. Because it stymies the growth of stable urban community life for black migrants from the countryside, apartheid exacerbates the problems of juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, and criminal violence. While Sibeko and her organization work to find jobs and provide parole supervision for individual ex-offenders, she believes that changing "the system" is essential to any effective crime reduction strategy.

As in our own country today, another view predominates. A few days before my visit with Judge Didcott in Durban, I'd sat in a Cape Town courtroom as Justice G. G. A. Munnik sentenced a 22-year-old "Colored" prisoner to death for raping and brutally beating an elderly white woman during a residential burglary. As he read his formal sentencing order from the bench, he acknowledged that South African courts very rarely impose death sentences for the crime of rape, but he had concluded that "lightning must strike every now and then" if the law is to serve as a deterrent. Following the sentencing, Judge Munnik received me in his chambers. While his secretary served coffee, he reviewed and signed the black-bordered death warrant that sealed the sentence he had just imposed. He was a round-faced, white-haired gentleman, disarmingly courteous and eager to explain the operation of the South African criminal courts.

I asked Judge Munnik whether he didn't think that violent crime in South Africa had social and economic causes that would never be remedied by severe punishments. This sort of question has gone out of fashion in the United States, but in Cape Town it seemed impossible to avoid. The "Colored" prisoner whose death warrant lay on the table before us came from a community ravaged by generations of discrimination, unemployment, and a crippling heritage of alcoholism deliberately fostered by the Cape winegrowers as a labor-control technique. Just a couple of miles away from where we sat, what had once been the heart of the "Colored" community in Cape Town was now a vast empty tract of bulldozed rubble and weeds, cleared of people and homes and then abandoned by seemingly insane city planners. The people who once lived there had been uprooted and shunted off to newly created suburban townships for "Coloreds" only, many miles from the economic and social life of Cape Town. Didn't any of this help to explain why there was so much crime in what was left of the "Colored" community?

Well, recalled the judge with a chuckle, the best answer he'd ever heard to that came from a black police chief whom he'd heard speak in Detroit during a tour of the United States in 1975. "Just because you're poor and discriminated against," the judge recalled the policeman as saying, "doesn't give you the right to murder my sister."

WHO ARE THE lawyers in this system? The court-appointed lawyer for the condemned rapist in Cape Town took his client's unexpected sentence very much in stride. Although he had argued vigorously in court, he seemed to know almost nothing about his client, and scarcely spoke with him after the death sentence before the man disappeared forever from view down the steps leading from the prisoner's dock. As we walked out of the courtroom, he to his office and me to my chat with the judge, the lawyer asked if the sentencing had bothered me. I'd seen people being sentenced to death before, I answered noncommittally. "It didn't upset me," he said. "I do what I can, and hope for the best." The lawyer was simply bursting with information about legal procedure, and when I re-

continued on page 24

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"My job is to create pictures of things no one has seen before."

"The image shows pressure contours formed in the plume of a rocket engine.

"But it isn't a photograph. It's a graphic representation of hundreds of millions of computer calculations. The colors indicate different pressures in the rocket plume — an image no human eye has seen until now. The technique is called computational fluid dynamics.

"Boeing has pioneered this technology to design airliners that are quieter, fly farther and use less

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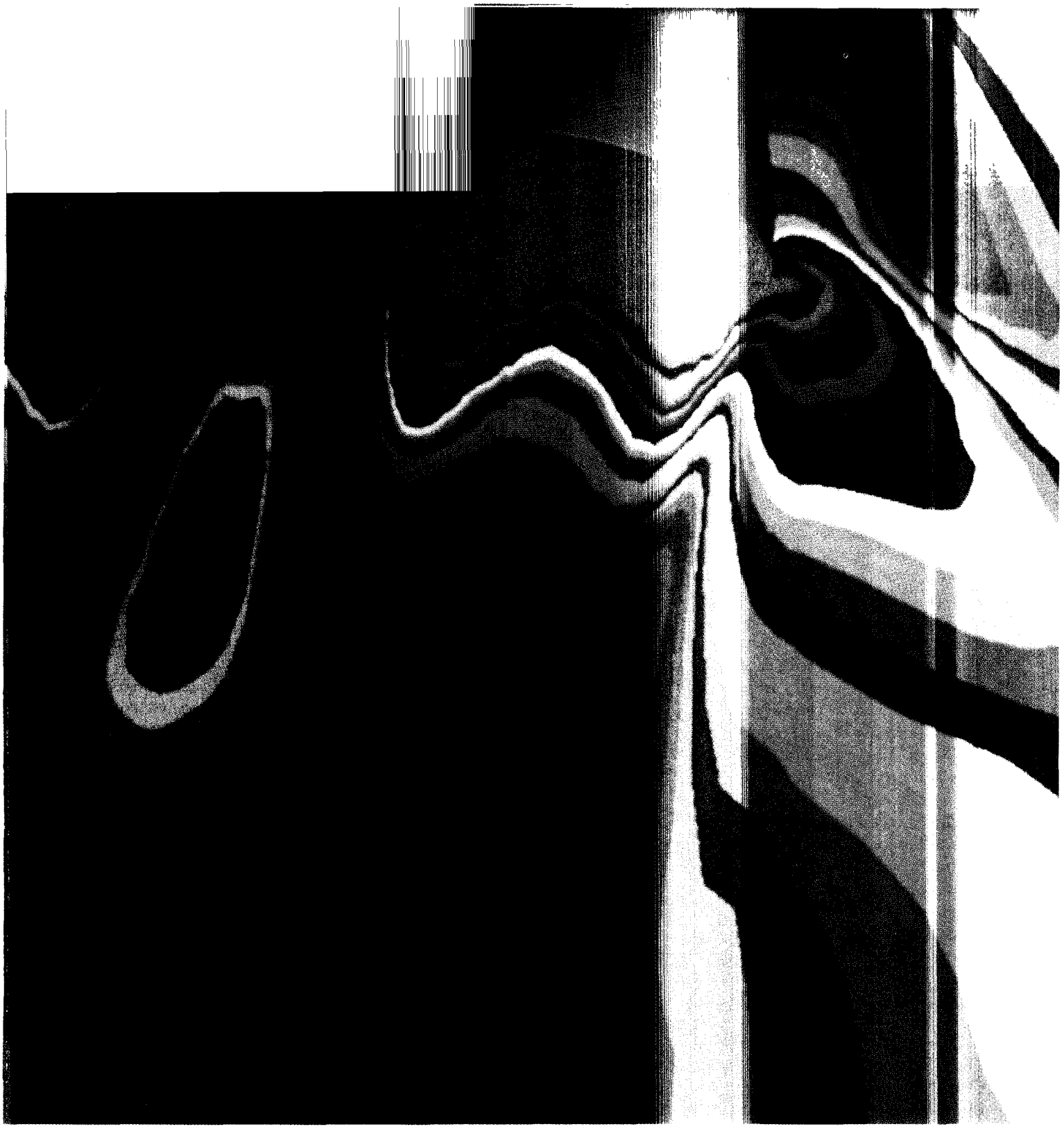

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fuel. And it helps us understand ultra-high-speed flight for future designs such as the National Aero-Space Plane — part spaceship, part airplane."

— *J. Eric Holcomb*
Senior Engineer, Flight Technology
Boeing Aerospace Company

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turned to his office later that day I found his eagerness to explain the intricacies of South African criminal law was undiminished by the grim and unanticipated ending of his client's case. As far as I could tell, what the death sentence meant to the lawyer was that there would be more papers to file, and some not particularly interesting legal questions to be raised on appeal.

In Johannesburg two weeks later, I asked John Dugard, a professor of law at the University of Witwatersrand and South Africa's foremost human rights scholar, about the South African *"pro deo"* (appointed counsel) system in death penalty cases. Capital trials, Dugard told me, serve as training grounds for fledgling lawyers. He'd been through that rite of passage himself: before he'd learned his way around the courtroom, he said, he'd already lost five court-assigned clients in a row to the gallows. "They start you off on capital cases," he recalled, "and once you've learned what you're doing, you're ready to handle divorces" for clients who can pay.

SO THE appointments go to the youngest and least experienced members of the bar. Occasionally, young lawyers try to stay with capital defense work out of conviction, but the work takes its toll. Jennifer Wild, a thin, intense woman in her 30s who is one of the only female Supreme Court lawyers in Durban, recalled having handled dozens of *pro deo* murder cases in her first years of law practice. She's something of a maverick in the local bar, often embroiled in controversy over anti-apartheid and feminist stands. While we spoke in her small office near the Natal Supreme Court building in Durban, her child's toys scattered about the floor, we were interrupted by phone calls about a police raid on a political meeting of teenagers in a black township near the city—someone's boy still missing, no information from the police.

She'd stopped handling capital cases, she told me. "I get too emotionally involved with those people, and I can't bear seeing them hanged." She described her assignment to defend a black man charged with the rape and murder of a white American tourist on the coast south of Durban. It was a stark case that provides grist for both sides. Her client lived in a squatter camp of some 10,000 displaced people. He had no legal right to live or work anywhere but the barren and impoverished "homeland" of the Transkei, but if he'd stayed there he'd have starved. So he lived illegally amid the shanties of the squatter camp, supporting himself by stealing car radios and tape decks, and staying numb with drink. The murder victim asked him and his drinking partners for directions late at night outside an illegal bar. They stole what she had, raped her, and killed her.

The judge refused to accept the man's intoxication as an extenuating circumstance, so the death sentence was automatic. On appeal, all realistic hope of mercy gone, Wild told the court what she really believed: that whites had to understand that the obsessive race-consciousness of South African law made the white woman appear, to people like her dispossessed, desperate black client in his alcohol-induced haze, to be a prize of inestimable value. "Those laws," she recalls one of the appellate judges telling her incredulously, "are there to protect you!" The prison system does not notify court-appointed counsel of their clients' executions: in this case, she learned that her client had been hanged when she noticed his photograph on an official announcement posted at the courthouse.

IN A TYPICAL YEAR, only one or two of the well over 100 prisoners to die on Pretoria Central's gallows are white. When the race of the murder victim is considered, racial disparities become enormous: during 1982-83, for example, government figures show that a black defendant was nearly 19 times more likely to hang if convicted of murdering a white than if his victim were black. Whites who murdered whites were roughly as likely to hang as blacks who murdered blacks, but not a single white was hanged for murdering a black.

These stark racial disparities suggest that the gallows, like almost every other facet of South African life, is organized by race. But this is a charge that even the most liberal members of the judicial system vehemently dispute. Each judge whom I met insisted that murder cases are always different from each other, and that statistical studies that focus only on race create a false impression of discrimination because they ignore all of the other factors that distinguish one homicide from another.

One liberal Johannesburg judge did admit that he would normally give far less time to a black convicted of killing another black in a Saturday night brawl in a township speakeasy than to a white man who killed another white in a downtown hotel bar. And Judge President Munnik explained to me, as he signed the death warrant of the "Colored" prisoner in his Cape Town office, that he thought it quite proper in rape cases to consider the relative social standing of the prisoner and the victim. After all, he observed, it's much worse for a respectable lady to be raped "by a tramp" than by someone of her own social class.

But when it came to sentencing for murder, almost all of the judges I met in South Africa insisted that race played no part in determining which handful of murderers ended up on Pretoria Central's gallows and which were sent to prison instead. If a far greater proportion of blacks were hanged for killing whites than for killing blacks, they asserted, that only meant that murders across race lines were more likely to be premeditated—such as murders to eliminate witnesses to robberies—while the murders of blacks by blacks were more often committed in the heat of passion in domestic arguments or drunken weekend brawls.

I'd heard this argument many times before, because it has been the response of almost every American court that has had to confront claims of racial disparity in the administration of the death penalty over the past 20 years. There's an element of truth to it: studies of murder sentencing in the United States do show that the apparent racial disparities diminish somewhat when the details of each case are taken into account.

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But the racial disparities remain, and they're very large. The most thorough study ever done, by University of Iowa law professor David Baldus, showed that when all relevant factors are taken into account, a murderer in Georgia is still 4.3 times more likely to be sentenced to death if his victim was white, and likelier still if he himself is black. That is the disparity that the Supreme Court's *McCleskey* decision found insufficient to justify setting aside any death sentences, and that prompted this anguished dissent from Justice William Brennan:

> It is tempting to pretend that minorities on death row share a fate in no way connected to our own, that our treatment of them sounds no echoes beyond the chambers in which they die. Such an illusion is ultimately corrosive, for the reverberations of injustice are not so easily confined. . . . [T]he way in which we choose those who will die reveals the depth of moral commitment among the living.

Whether research like that done in Georgia's *McCleskey* case would uncover similar racial patterns in South Africa is impossible to say. No nationwide studies have been carried out to test for race discrimination in South African murder sentencing, and the necessary empirical data is probably unobtainable. Nor is this field of research especially attractive to South African academics. In 1970 an intrepid law school professor named Barend Von Niekerk published a lengthy law review article in which he reported survey results indicating that some South African lawyers believed that race entered into capital sentencing decisions. The judicial response to Von Niekerk's article was to put the professor on trial for contempt of court, and the academic literature on this subject has been muted ever since.

LEAVING SOUTH AFRICA, I tried to compare its death-selection system with the one that has been taking shape here over the last 15 years. With a few exceptions, death sentences are imposed for the same sorts of crimes in both countries. The differences I'd expected to find—those involving race—are by no means clear. All but one of the sentencing judges in South Africa are white, but so are almost all of the judges here. In both countries, most members of the public appear to support retention of capital punishment. In neither country is there any indication that executions have done anything to reduce high rates of crime. In both countries blacks and killers of whites account for much more than their proportional share of the executions. But judges in both countries offer logical (and similar) explanations for why that might be so even without discrimination. And as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last April in *McCleskey*, statistics can never prove for certain that racism rather than the severity of the crime accounts for any particular death sentence.

The one really marked difference between South Africa's death sentencing system and ours is the length of the appeals process. The wait between the handing down of a death sentence and the hanging at Pretoria Central ranges from six months to two years, while American death penalty appeals frequently last for a decade or more. Both systems send hundreds of prisoners to the condemned cells each year, but there we hesitate. South Africa does not.

In some ways—in the availability of executive clemency, for example, and the elaborateness of the written judicial findings required in each case—the South African sentencing system presents an appearance of greater rationality than ours. On the other hand, South Africa's provisions for defense counsel are even less adequate than the public defender and appointed-counsel systems on which most American capital defendants must rely.

BUT THESE ARE differences of detail. The systems are alike in this: in both countries, some of the very worst murderers are certain to go to death row. Because those are the cases that get most of the news coverage, the public sees a system that appears to be working as it's supposed to. As for the rest of the death sentences that American and South African courts winnow from the thousands of potential capital cases each year, almost everything depends on luck. A black killer of a white victim who draws an all-white jury in rural Georgia—or Judge Munnik in Cape Town—can probably count on a death sentence. If the random variables of race or sentencer are more favorable, his risk of death decreases. The practical effect of all of this is that some prisoners are condemned to die because of their guilt, some because of chance, and some because of race. There is usually no way of determining which prisoners are which.

This last problem—the fact that the death row egg can never be unscrambled to reveal the effect of race on any particular sentence—is what led the Supreme Court to uphold Georgia's death sentencing system last April. A similar challenge in the South African courts would likely produce a similar response there. But the question of whether a racially polarized society can ever allocate death in a colorblind way remains, whether the courts are willing to confront it or not.

Racially divided societies have a certain sameness about them. To stand in the white downtown of a prosperous city, surrounded by glass skyscrapers, shiny new cars, and automated bank teller machines, and to know that bitter and desperate black slums lie just out of sight—that is not something that an American must go to South Africa to experience. Nor must Americans go to South Africa to find a white society that notices skin color before any other human characteristic, and where almost every relationship between blacks and whites bears a crippling burden of anxiety or guilt.

As legal systems, both the South African and the American modes of death-selection are complex and highly evolved. But we should not be surprised that race takes its own toll. Racism in the use of the death penalty offends no political power blocs. Its victims are violent criminals—expendable people who have no claim on our sympathies. If we choose to, we can treat these prisoners like crickets in a fisherman's bait jar: we can casually pick one to impale on the hook while leaving ten others, rummaging among them for no good reason at all, and who will care? Who will even know? □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Deviltries

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more—the breach between a well-known novel and its film version. The thousands who have read John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick* will see a quite different film than will those who go to it uninitiated. Fidelity to the original is one of the oldest issues in cinema history, never (I hope) to be settled. Some films that depart strenuously from their originals benefit by it: for instance, Tavernier's *The Clockmaker* is a better work than Simenon's novel. Some, like *The Witches of Eastwick*, are lesser than the original but not completely dismissible therefore. Those who know Updike's book may, after some wrenches, come round to the fun available to the newcomers.

The Witches of Eastwick
(Warner Bros.)
Withnail and I
(Cineplex Odeon)

Updike is, at the very least, faithful to his title: his book is about three witches in a 1960s New England town—three attractive youngish women and their encounters, singly and then jointly, with a diabolical newcomer to the town. For me, the novel's best achievement is its tenor, the way in which the familiar setting of small-town life is easily, almost casually, leavened with necromancy. The three women cast their spells as if they were putting up a different kind of preserve, but they are, though somewhat offhandedly, genuine witches.

If you want to see this tenor recaptured on film, you'll be disappointed; but other rewards are possible. Michael Cristofer's screenplay begins by ignoring the title. The three women are not witches, just friends, who, in their now-single lives, dream of male companionship. To Eastwick comes an attractive, rich stranger, heralded by diabolical portents, who eventually seduces all three. Only toward the end, when complications follow, do the three women suddenly, and with unexplained skill, rummage up a spell with which they try to destroy the man. This also destroys the picture, which then becomes a poor comic-horror flick.

Updike's approach is continually humorous even when events are not humorous because his vantage point is comic. Cristofer's screenplay depends for its comedy on comic incidents. Some of them are markedly better than others. Besides, some of the stranger's diabolism, like making a cello burst into flame, simply doesn't fit the tone of this revised version. Why don't Cristofer's women—non-witches—shrink in horror from their other-worldly lover? Only one metaphoric view helps to hold the film together: women need men (most women, anyway); men are devils; women pay for what they get. As an allegory of the cost of heterosexual fulfillment for women, the film has some comic edge.

It also has some longueurs. Partly this is because of lumps of unbaked dough in the script, and partly it's because only one of the three women, Susan Sarandon, is a competent actress. Cher, one of the others, does little more than merchandise her familiar cool personality. The third, Michelle Pfeiffer, is a pretty woman who has learned to make appropriate faces. The kingpin in the cast, no matter how you take the phrase, is Jack Nicholson as the stranger—so much so that it seems as if the picture was made so that he could play the role.

Nicholson eats it up the way he devours food and women in the picture. In a limited way Nicholson is like an American Gérard Depardieu: part of his appeal is in his profession of appetites—for food and sex. Like Depardieu, there is much more to him, but he relies on his hungers for much of his charm. Also like Depardieu, he revels in trying to look unattractive, gauche, the way a ballet dancer shuffles into a rehearsal with confidence in the grace soon to be revealed. Unlike Depardieu, and certainly since *The Shining*, Nicholson enjoys underscoring this contrast by being photographed grotesquely, fish-eye lenses and so on. Nicholson doesn't do much acting in this film, but he quite effectively displays temperament and traits, like a good juggler doing his stuff.

George Miller directed with subservience to—not mastery of—the supernatural elements and with minimal grasp of comic nuance. With the latter-day, or soupy, camera of Vilmos Zsigmond, Miller provides a picture-postcard New England village. And was it really necessary, in the opening shot, to use such a blatant studio model of the town? When (to name one example) Hitchcock opened *The Lady Vanishes* with a shot of a model village, we made concessions to technical necessity. They no longer apply.

If you remember Truffaut's *Story of Adèle H.*, you will remember Bruce Robinson, whether or not you know his name: he played the English lieutenant pursued by Adèle. Years later, wearing another hat, he wrote the screenplay of *The Killing Fields*. Now, adding still another hat, he has written and directed

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Jean de Florette. Part One—self-contained—of Marcel Pagnol's strong, slow farm-life epic. Yves Montand and Gérard Depardieu make it vivid. (Part Two comes along in December.) (Reviewed 7/6/87)

My Life as a Dog. Unusually good, unsentimental yet feeling account of a 12-year-old Swedish boy's education for life through a couple of deaths. (5/25/87)

Roxanne. Steve Martin (yes, Steve Martin) winning and funny in his own updating of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Daryl Hannah romantic as Roxanne. Fred Schepisi directs brightly. (6/29/87)

The Untouchables. Chicago, 1930 again, the Capone-Ness story again, but gorgeously handled by Brian De Palma, aided by David Mamet's script and, especially, Robert De Niro as Scarface Al. (6/22/87)

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Withnail and I. It's a small, delightfully neat picture in a valuable tradition: film as memoir. Examples are plentiful; Truffaut himself with *The Four Hundred Blows* is only one such. Robinson uses the form to make history of a rite of his own passage.

He is the "I," of course, and Withnail is a coeval young actor in the London of 1969. Both are unemployed much of the time, living in a dirty, overstuffed cheap flat on unemployment checks, drinking a great deal, smoking as much pot as they can get, quite consciously being end-of-the-'60s characters. Withnail is the general of this two-man army, but it's the "I" who decides that they need a break from London seediness. Withnail has a wealthy fat pouf of an uncle who lends them his cottage in the country. Uncle Monty, however, doesn't add that he plans to visit them because he has a lech for the "I." Before, during, and after the country stay, comedy keeps flavoring the scrapes, with the added spice of commotion recollected in tranquillity. The memoir ends, as does the decade, with the narrator getting a decent acting job and leaving Withnail, who, in the last shot, quotes Hamlet to console and justify himself.

With an access of hindsight, we perceive that the narrator is really the stronger of the pair though he generally sees himself dominated. But Robinson evidently remembers this year in his life as his Withnail period, and, wittily and sharply, he shows us why it mattered. Self-dramatization was a keynote of the time, a mode of which Withnail was a master; and he mastered his friend. Part of their drama was the belief that they lived in a decade as in a place, so that, when the decade ended, they had to move as from a place.

Robinson's writing is carefully brisk (although, as in many British films, some of the throwaway lines are lost to American ears). His directing is good: he knows where to look and for how long. Paul McGann is thoughtfully taking as the narrator. But three elements guarantee the film's quality. Peter Hannan's camera makes the London squalor almost Dickensian and makes the green of the English countryside rightly unreal as a background for this ultraurban pair. Richard Griffiths as the epicurean-lecherous uncle delightfully overarticulates speech and movement. And Richard E. Grant is dark and dashing as Withnail, a sensitive soul doomed to an insufficiently appreciative, insufficiently alcoholic world.

Quibble if you like that Robinson frequently wanders from the narrator's view by showing us scenes in which "I" isn't present. (That last shot, for instance.) The real test of formal violations is: Are we glad they happened? Here we certainly are. At the end the very violations help to give the film its neatness: its encasement of the time in one man's life when it was possible to be irresponsible.

A Farewell To Art

Hemingway
by Kenneth S. Lynn

(Simon and Schuster, 702 pp., $24.95)

Even before he became a legend and began to play it up, Hemingway's first readers seemed compelled to confuse the writer with the man. He virtually told them to do this: Hemingway's stories clearly reflected early experiences. Then came the image of him as a 20th-century Byron, piled up from literary associations (he was a great reader) that he was not shy in offering. Tough, hard, even brazen in the personal myth he made of war and peace alike, "the Hemingway hero" was cruelly, indifferently erotic. Yet he became the symbol of a doomed romantic tenderness, the epitome of world-weary youth frantic for love and sport in a mad, bad world.

The very tension and terseness of Hemingway's intimidating style provided the shock that a new era needed. The mastery over experience that this style seemed to display turned Hemingway's "objective" and "emotionless" art into a personal triumph. Of all 20th-century American writers, he was the last frontiersman. Yet still his subject was literature. The reader could not escape the force and savvy of him, the fierce addiction to nature, the truculent competitiveness. He was a savage, notoriously dangerous to know, who claimed Cézanne as his teacher.

So "Hem" came with the territory he had created. And how he loved this, the insatiable "champion" over everyone else, the fascinator in every saloon, the international sportsman living it up from Paris to Africa, Cuba to Montana, adored by many women (and many wives) to whom he was ritually unfaithful. When he shot his head off in the last, long-expected Hemingway short story, John F. Kennedy and Fidel Castro were united in mourning.

Since then a flood of material has poured in from Hemingway's brother, Leicester, and sister Marcelline, his sons Jack and Gregory, his third wife, Martha Gellhorn, and his fourth wife, Mary Welsh, many "old friends," and many, many assistant professors. Carlos Baker's standard biography of 1969 has been annotated and extended in various directions by dozens of special studies. Some are illuminating—Bernice Kert's *The Hemingway Women*, Michael Reynolds's *The Young Hemingway*, and Peter Griffin's *Along with Youth*. Others prove that the criticism industry in academe can now be as falsely intimate as the scraps *Esquire* used to promote between Norman Mailer and James Baldwin.

Of all the many portraits of Hemingway I have encountered, Kenneth Lynn's obsessively Freudian attempt to show Hemingway as an unconscious homosexual is the most relentlessly researched and the most condescending. Lynn's chief concern with Hemingway's writing is to demonstrate that the bedeviled fellow's real subject was his erotic conflicts. There is nothing in this book to account for Hemingway's addiction to literature, nothing to show what in his own mind led him to become a writer, nothing about the early fascination with landscape that became the safeguard of his artistry. But there is a very great deal, delivered in the armchair Freudian's most clinically superior tone, about the exaggerations, distortions, and lies Hemingway practiced in transferring his personal experience to literature. Apparently "transference" is all a writer needs, is as routine behind a typewriter as it is on both sides of the psychoanalytic couch.

So Hemingway's difficulties in facing up to himself (his mother kept the infant Ernest in dresses and "twinned" him with his slightly older sister, Marcelline)

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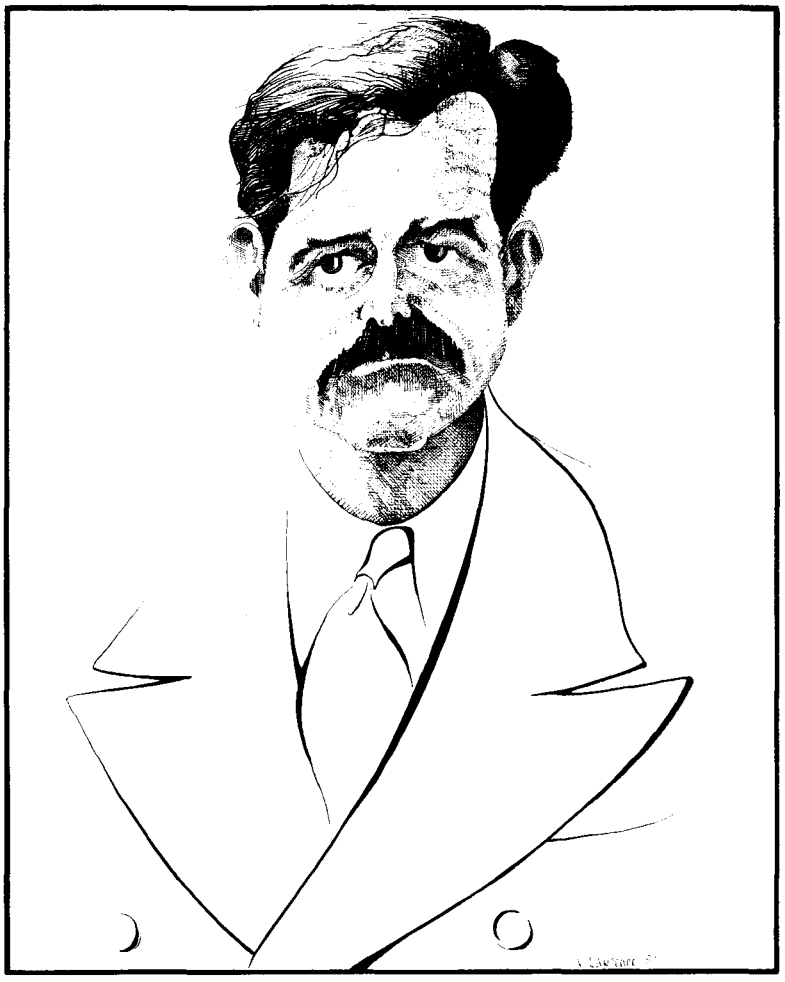
become *the* Hemingway story. Even the famously reduced and spare Hemingway style, once the astonishment of the Western world, acknowledged even by Soviet writers as the one style that "catches the tempo of our time," is passed off and explained in this summation of Hemingway's terrible case:

> To be a boy but to be treated as a girl. To feel impelled to prove your masculinity through flat denials of your anxieties (*Fraid a nothing* had been your motto as a child) and bold lies about your exploits. To be forced to practice the most severe economy in your attempts to "render" your life artistically, because your capital of self-understanding was too small to permit you to be expansive and your fear of self-exposure too powerful. To make a virtue of necessity by packing troubled feelings below the surface of your stories like dynamite beneath a bridge. To be tempted by your enormous ambition into writing a novel, despite the risks inherent in amplitude.

At another point Hemingway's style is put down as "severely limited, puritanically repressed." But in truth everything about Hemingway's mediocre apprentice work, and the gassiness that eventually overcame him, show that the prime Hemingway style was entirely *made*, a conscious feat, like the Cézannes whose uncanny placing of rock and tree inspired him.

Lynn writes as if Hemingway's "concealment," his fear, his ignorance of "who he actually was" are the material of his art. It is bad enough to interpret everything about an original artist in terms of a (supposed) psychological case history. Homosexuality seems to have become the last noteworthy itch by which to explain human personality. Lynn nowhere says that Hemingway *was* a homosexual; he was just pointed in that direction by a pretentious, overbearing mama who kept the babe in dresses, paired him with his sister, and so dominated her husband that he committed suicide. (Dr. Hemingway believed himself to be mortally ill.)

But it is just obtuse, on the basis of some inflated Freudian assumptions about Hemingway's "trans-sexual fantasies" (most directly given in the unpublished original manuscript of *The Garden of Eden*, written by a battered writer getting more and more unhinged), to assume that Hemingway's babyhood was "bizarre" enough to cripple him for life. Building on maternal habits that were decidedly not bizarre for upper-class families of Hemingway's time and place, Lynn's thesis is that Hemingway wrote straight from his life to the page. The problem was that the poor dope didn't know the "truth" about himself.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Lynn's heavy-handed approach to Hemingway's babyhood, to Hemingway's art, does not show the fascination with Hemingway so marked in the vast literature about him. Armed with Freudian hindsight, Lynn seems less interested in Hemingway than in the case he provides. (This hindsight is a surprising development; Lynn gave up a Harvard professorship in the 1960s to teach at the predominantly black Washington City College, which bitterly disillusioned him with his old utopianism.) Despite the relentless coverage of Hemingway's many faults and betrayals, and the replication of what every reviewer said about every Hemingway book as it came out, what is really intrinsic and central to Hemingway—his passion for the word, for the American wilderness and its romantic truth—is missing from this book. How ever did such a madly assertive, ferocious egotist come to such delicacy of tone, feel such pain at the dismantling of nature in America, retain such a special sense of what "in our time" is wrong with history and therefore with ourselves?

In place of such literary and historical considerations, we are told (hardly for the first time) how vulnerable, to the point of violence, Hemingway could be. No other writer, especially no well-selling novelist on the Scribner list, was allowed to live: Hemingway was abominable to the friends he was putting into his books, even as he cavorted with them, flashing his famous charm. All true. But Lynn is also insistent that Hemingway had a thing about women's hair, liked to have girlfriend or wife wear it cropped short "like a boy's." He was fond of lesbians, and wanted to sleep with Gertrude Stein because she was his mother all over again. "When Gertrude savaged him eleven years later in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, she showed how well she had figured him out, even though she knew none of the bizarre details of his background. . . . Did she sense on the day she met him that this muscular young man was hiding something?"

This accusation of "hiding something" is the special edge Lynn brings to every view of Hemingway. Nothing could be more misleading in its treatment of the subtle transpositions between experience and imagination. By common consent

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The Sun Also Rises now seems the most enduring, the most compact, of Hemingway's novels. He was, as the saying goes, a writer more "lyric" than "dramatic," more suited to the short story than to the novel. Yet this one enduring novel was written as a roman à clef, almost poisonously so. Nobody at all acquainted with the Hemingway lore needs to be told who the "originals" were, or that the Harold Loeb who became Robert Cohn once well and truly socked Hemingway. Loeb felt that his life was ruined by Hemingway's portrait.

The Sun Also Rises has survived because, among other reasons, it is a fabulous historical novel, a novel of the greatest joy and treachery in a now never to be recovered period, when all the world was getting over one war and awaiting another. It has survived because it is so distinct in every word, in every line, that a brief brilliant period on the edge of still another European cataclysm is forever with us in all its "fiesta" and meanness. Its very meanness, the other side of its shining eroticism, has kept it alive. Hemingway had a grudge against history. It was one of his old-fashioned traits.

How does Lynn treat this unique, this glitteringly brilliant and ever-alive work of art? Letting no occasion slip that invites a discussion of women's hair, he reminds us that Lady Brett Ashley, the very same who in sweater and skirt looked like she was "built like the sides of a yacht," also had cropped hair "brushed back like a boy's." Impotent Jake Barnes in the novel is hopelessly in love with her. But since the model for Brett, Duff Twysden, was involved with a decidedly not-impotent Ernest Hemingway, it follows that said Hemingway was really attracted to . . . a boy. Lynn so confounds Lady Brett with Duff that we get this: "Furthermore, [Brett] affects a man's felt hat, just as Duff did, and can hold her liquor with equivalent gallantry. Hemingway's lady friend, in short, would make the journey from life to art virtually intact."

Nonsense. No "real" person ever gets into a book intact. The very act of writing someone into a book makes that person different. Take Hemingway in Lynn's book. Can we really believe that the miserable, frightened, horribly conflicted mother's boy who appears in this book as "Hemingway" is the man who in life, while tortured by many things (especially the criminality that prevails as politics "in our time"), wrote what he wrote? Dazzled us and frightened us as no writer has dazzled and frightened us since?

ALFRED KAZIN

Alfred Kazin's study of landscape in American writing will appear next year.

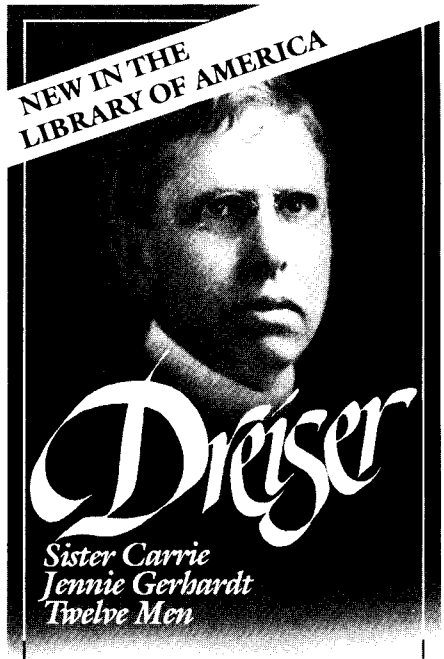
FLOUNDERING

The Rat
by Günter Grass
translated by Ralph Manheim

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 371 pp., $17.95)

"At Christmas I wished for a rat, in the hope, no doubt, of stimulus words for a poem about the education of the human race," begins Günter Grass's new novel, his first major work since *The Flounder*. As soon as this didactic purpose is stated, and the Christmas wish granted, it turns out that the human race is sadly unfit for any education, as unfit as it has always been since man set foot in the author's native land, the Kashubian shores of now Polish Pomerania. Words themselves soon become exhausted, since, as one character remarks, "everything has been said. Because there's nothing left but to take leave."

In *The Rat* no less than the whole of humanity is taking leave, both with a bang and a whimper, to be replaced by a new civilization of rats—the chosen tribe that comes to rule an earth liberated at last from man's unwelcome presence. In a manner befitting such a valedictory occasion, Grass's novel reassembles some of his favorite characters and themes, to allow them halfhearted and finally futile attempts at new beginnings. Oscar Matzerath of *The Tin Drum* is now a successful



"American writing, before and after his time, differed almost as much as biology before and after Darwin."
—H.L. Mencken

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THEODORE DRAPER
on
Soviet Reformers From Lenin to Gorbachev

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video producer turning 60. He visits his native Danzig, now Polish Gdansk, to attend the 117th birthday of his grandmother, Anna Koljaiczek. The painter Malskat is a master forger of Gothic frescoes; but nobody dares to challenge their authenticity, since their appearance on the whitewashed and burned out walls of the Lübeck Cathedral is presented as a "miracle" by the authorities, who are hungry for a divine sanction for the Bundesrepublik's admirable and purely material achievements. The Flounder, too, still speaks from the depths of the polluted Baltic Sea, or at least his presence is felt by six feminists on a maritime ecological mission. The mission itself turns into a mythical quest for the legendary sunken city of Vineta, which is said to have been governed by a wise and gentle matriarchy.

The author-narrator plans to produce, in cooperation with Oscar Matzerath, a video film in which a group of fairy-tale characters organizes a conspiracy to save Germany's dying forests by subverting all the industrial civilizations and installing the Brothers Grimm as the leaders of a new government. It soon becomes evident, however, that we are trapped, together with all the novel's characters, in a dream, a nightmare really, in which the author-narrator, marooned in a space capsule, is forced to listen to his Christmas rat's endless exhortations against human perfidy and to the gruesome details of the inevitable end of the human race.

DESPITE the accumulation of realistic, grotesque, and surreal events and images, one has the odd feeling that very little happens in Grass's book. One of the reasons, perhaps, is the familiarity and the predictability of most of what actually does happen. Of course the women on board the research vessel will endlessly complain about the arrogance of men, while patiently knitting sweaters for them. Of course the painter Malskat will be punished, not for his forgeries but for trying to reveal the sham. Of course the fairy-tale characters, together with their forest, will be trodden into the ground by the ever-triumphant military-industrial complex. Of course the world will end in an apparently accidental nuclear exchange. And of course that holocaust—which will destroy the feminist expedition, Anna Koljaiczek's birthday party, and nearly all of life on earth—will spare the rats and some other low (and therefore innocent) creatures, and Grass's native Danzig-Gdansk, as his monument of unfulfilled and unreciprocated nostalgia.

The rat tells us that toward the end of the human era there was no shortage of millenarian warnings: innocent children painted their hair in loud colors and decorated themselves with scrap iron, processions of self-immolators set themselves on fire privately and publicly. There were unusual cloud formations, singing jellyfish, and rats, rats everywhere scurrying through the streets of the world's cities and building underground shelters. Despite the obvious warnings, however, humanity intended to live on. In fact, it enjoyed a reasonable measure of security:

> True, Power was up in arms against Power, but Power has secured itself against Power by means of carefully graduated terror and supervised supervision, by shifting all responsibility to chips and clips and leaving no room in the decision-making process for human bungling, for man's propensity, observed since Noah, for going against the rules.

The rat never tires of reminding us that such a degree of security in a thoroughly irrational and mischievous world calls for radical measures. "In the end humans were too cowardly to be afraid. . . . You had long sacrificed your freedom to the idol Security," declares the rat, echoing the moral doctrine of the Baader-Meinhof group. It soon becomes evident that a truly effective remedy for human failure will have to eliminate the patient together with the disease. While the personnel at the central bunkers of both Protector Powers lazily discuss Sunday baseball and soccer scores, the rats invade the computers and trigger the nuclear exchange.

> We, said the She-rat, merely set off what man had thought up: enough of it, in the words of their vengeful God, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. Many times over, in fact. That is how determined human beings were to destroy themselves and all other creatures. . . . We regret nothing. It had to be. Too often we warned them in vain. Our processions in broad daylight were plain enough. Yet nothing that might have appeased our concern was done.

After this self-fulfilling prophecy, and a spectacular show of destruction whose grim details the rat gives us with relish, humanity makes a partial return in the form of humanoid rats—the product of genetic engineering. Despite their Scandinavian lineage and their social democratic inclinations, these humanoids, too, prove to be exploiters, just like their makers, and they, too, have to be destroyed by genetically unmanipulated rats.

Grass's rats speak in a tone of moral superiority. Yet they present, perhaps deliberately, a most ambiguous alternative to human ignominy. Their strength is a purely biological instinct for survival—a tribal instinct that calls for endless sacrifices of individuals for the good of the species. "Stop being individual 'I's' and become a collective 'we,'" advises the She-rat in one of her moments of compassion. Indeed, when more details are filled in, the kingdom of rats begins to resemble a totalitarian utopia, where all individuals learn to act and feel as a single body.

WHAT EXACTLY was the human evil, or the tragic error, that justified such unequivocal condemnation and such cruel punishment? Against the author-narrator's weak protestations, and more frequently with his silent consent, the rat's voice rises in wrathful judgment, rejecting and ridiculing the whole of human history. But it is a voice (as the author himself remarks) that speaks exclusively in "didactic generalities":

> They made a mess of everything. Always had to contrive something with these erect heads of theirs. Even when stifled in glut, they never had enough. When necessary, they invented shortages. Starving gluttons! Stupid know-it-alls. Always at odds with themselves. Scary in bed, they went looking for danger outside. Impatient with senior citizens, they spoiled their children. Slave-holding slaves. Pious hypocrites! Exploiters! Unnatural and therefore cruel. Crucified their God's only son. Blessed their weapons. Good riddance!

These crude generalities amount to little more than the clichés of two decades ago, to a parody of the radical indignation of the '60s. Men were created brothers, yet they hurt and kill each other; reason should bring self-improvement, yet we turn it into power; we were given the planet to share, yet we wallow in greed and pollute our environment. Nuclear weapons in particular figure prominently as proof of human insanity. There are also suggestions that the world would be a better place if we allowed women to take it over and to create a peaceful and nurturing civilization. And, as if to strengthen the impression that his bleak vision of humanity is desperately seeking a political cause, Grass interrupts his narrative with long poetic passages—presumably fragments of the "poem about the education of the hu-

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man race"—that unerringly convey a sense of adolescent regret and confusion:

> Something must be wrong.
> I don't know what, the direction maybe.
> Some mistake, but what, has been made,
> but when and where wrong,
> especially since everything's been running
> like clockwork,
> though in a direction
> that signs demonstrate to be wrong.

Of course, Grass being Grass, we are not allowed to take it all too seriously. There is subtle mockery of the feminists, the ecologists, the punk rebellion, the Swedish protesters. But the mockery is too subtle, and too little. Finally Grass's clichés are not a means of reaching for something more genuine and more original. His novel is completely dependent upon its platitudes for its imagery and its moral teaching. No illumination, nothing surprising or paradoxical, should be sought in *The Rat*. No mystery is hidden beneath its surface, no sudden reversals, no exploration of contradiction, no bold revelation of a new thought on a familiar opinion. There is nothing, in short, that makes this contribution to the literature of moral anxiety artistically compelling and intellectually credible.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Günter Grass's reputation as a moralist is based primarily on his early novels *The Tin Drum* and *Cat and Mouse*. They were interpreted as indictments of war and Nazism. Their characters, children growing up in German-Polish Danzig on the eve of the war, appear as victims and as judges of their society, but also as the embodiments of that society's ugliest and most disturbing aspects. Their physical and moral deformities are both the product and the indictment of the evils inherent in history and in individual lives.

A closer look, however, shows that the war, and more generally the totalitarian madness, played only an indirect role in Grass's novels. The heroes' self-appointed, rather manipulative innocence, their programmatic immorality, and their destructive urges were less a rebellion against the corruption of the "adult" world than the expression of a painful ambiguity about their own childhood. The strength of these early books really derived from a struggle between nostalgia and disgust for those allegedly arcadian years. It is an uncertainty shared, no doubt, by many Germans of Grass's generation. It accounts for the author's creation of his own private arcadia out of a half-mythical Kashubian past. Moreover, it provides at least a partial explanation for the young protagonists' "outsiderness," and for the irrational negativism with which they confront the apparent normality of life after the war.

In his later works, especially *The Flounder*, Grass employs that same irrationalist perspective of offended innocence as a legitimate tool of moral evaluation. His *portes-paroles* assume animal forms to stress the distance that separates them from the world they put on trial, and perhaps also to liberate them from the inevitable relativism that results from any involvement in human affairs. From that comfortable position they denounce and castigate humanity, practically uncontested by any opposite view. But their hectic soliloquies and their apocalyptic prophecies, always unmitigated by a sense of the relative character of their own position, are the signs of a moral irrationalism that tends to elevate instinctive responses to the rank of general principles.

The main characteristic of this moral irrationalism is the absence of any sense of proportion and relation between things. All forms of evil, real and imagined, become equally ominous. Such a leveling undermines any serious moral reflection. In Grass's later novels, as in his political writings, we see more and more a powerful impatience with distinctions, an impatience that allows him to maintain his moralizing tone while carefully avoiding real moral and political issues. Life in the Bundesrepublik, with its materialism and boredom, looks as threatening as life in the Third Reich; the United States is as repressive as the Soviet Union; both German states today are equally phony; both political systems are equally corrupt; the destruction of forests is an equivalent of genocide; and so on.

Toward the end of his new novel, Grass makes an interesting experiment. He retrieves the condemned human world; he allows his characters to complete safely their missions and to continue, for a while, their uneventful lives. Oscar Matzerath celebrates his 60th birthday. The occasion turns into a ritual of mourning for Anna Koljaiczek, who passes away quietly on the same day in her Kashubian village. Finally we witness a tender reunion between Oscar and Maria, his adolescent love and the mother of his brother-son; there are intimations that at this late point in his life, with the Kashubian chapter of his childhood closed, Oscar

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Matzerath may finally start to grow.

But swiftly the nightmare returns. *The Rat* ends on the familiar hysterical note. Having taken the name of the (unflinchingly non-violent) Polish "Solidarity," the rats relentlessly exterminate their humanoid kin. "Thus mankind's foulest idea has been expunged. Its last monstrosity has been exterminated. What those iron letters say, we have practiced, man has not. Nothing capable of survival bears witness to him." We have reached the end of the line. There is nothing more to say or to deny. Even hope, as we are told, is a delusion, a cruel joke played by humanity on itself.

Still, surprisingly, somebody tries to voice an objection. It is none other than Herr Matzerath himself, the "angel of innocence, who took part in everything without taking part." "Too much apocalypse," he protests to the narrator. "Decreeing the end of the world as if you were God Almighty. You and your everlasting last tango." He has a point.

JAROSLAW ANDERS

Jaroslaw Anders is a Polish writer living in Washington.

LEFT BEHIND

Visions and Nightmares: America After Reagan by Robert Lekachman

(Macmillan, 316 pp., $19.95)

The Next Left: The History of a Future by Michael Harrington

(Henry Holt, 197 pp., $17.95)

Even before the Iran-*contra* scandal broke, liberals were beginning to sense a change in political seasons. Unlike Margaret Thatcher, whose efforts to move Britain to the right picked up steam after her second win, Ronald Reagan lost momentum after his re-election. Once tax reform passed, the administration had no urgent program to press upon Congress or the nation. There was a vacuum to fill, and it was filled by scandal rather than by new ideas or initiatives.

Scandals are great fun, and they open up political opportunities; but they don't alter the basic lines of economic and political development. Like the Nixon administration's crackup in its second term, the Reagan administration's crackup increases the chances for a liberal rebound in national politics. Yet it is worth remembering that Jimmy Carter's slim victory in 1976 produced scarcely a pause in the rightward drift of American politics. A Democratic victory in 1988 could well prove to be yet another parenthesis in a long Republican era. If 1988 produces any real shift, its cause will not be the undoing of Reaganism by scandals; it will be the restored capacity of liberalism to deal effectively with the economic and political troubles that have accumulated during the 1980s. But that restored capacity is not yet evident.

This is a ripe moment, then, for work that peers into the future and attempts to chart a path to the left. Unfortunately, neither of these books by redoubtable men of the left succeeds in delineating a persuasive view of the future, much less a plausible program. Still, from their limitations there are lessons to be learned—mostly negative lessons about the craft of popular political economy.

It's a bad practice to write a book as if it were a newspaper column or a magazine article. In *Visions and Nightmares*, Robert Lekachman dons the hat of a political commentator and prognosticates about the near term in American politics—indeed, about so near a term that the book already shows its age. Nobody can read his extended speculations about the presidential prospects of Mario Cuomo and Gary Hart without the sense that time passes too quickly for such reflections to be placed between hard covers. And just as Lekachman's premonitions of the campaign seem dated by events, so, too, do his discussions of the political fortunes of the religious right and Reaganism. To be sure, much of his political analysis still applies, but too much of it was already familiar a year ago to readers of the op-ed pages.

Lekachman is best in Galbraith-like sallies at conservatives, but the book is weak in precisely the areas where a training in political economy ought to have made it strong. He takes on the conservative case for privatization, but he does not address its basic theoretical claims about the underlying causes of government growth and the differences in behavior produced by public versus private ownership (as these arguments have been developed by the "property rights" and "public choice" economists). He discusses contemporary trends in American politics, culture, and religion, but the discussion is not anchored in any broad historical understanding. He gives us sardonic pages about yuppies, but mainly communicates his own distaste for them. "Yuppie" makes a good epithet, but it's not a usable category for serious social analysis. And when Lekachman finally turns to a program of his own, his imagination seems to fail him, and he leans on other authors; though I agree with 95 percent of what he says, I reserve the right to deplore its want of intellectual surprise.

Lekachman's prognosis is glum. After the Reagan fiasco, he says, there may well be more Reaganism. In *The Next Left*, by contrast, Michael Harrington assumes the more classical posture of socialists that history is on their side. After so many disasters of their own, socialists might be forgiven a little pessimism in these waning years of a century of socialist disappointment. But no such dispensation need be given to America's most prominent theorist of democratic socialism. Harrington is convinced that within five years the left throughout the West will have another opportunity for power. His question is whether the left will be able to seize this new opportunity with a clear understanding of the past and an effective program for the future. The objective of his book is to help see that it does.

The Next Left is strongest as an effort to translate recent work in the social sciences into popular political analysis. Harrington keeps up with left-wing scholarship in political economy—not just in the United States, but in Europe, too—and he distills it into his own well-reasoned account of the origins of our present economic predicament. The merit of Harrington's work is that he combines a sense of history with a cosmopolitan range rare among political an-

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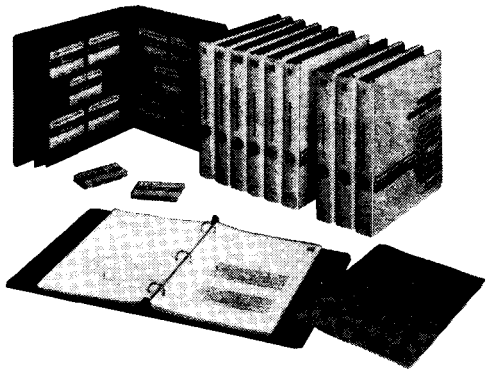

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Howard Raiffa has been at Harvard since 1957 and holds the Frank P. Ramsey Chair in Managerial Economics, jointly sponsored by the Graduate School of Business Administration and the Department of Economics. He is a frequent consultant to industry. As one of the outstanding pioneers of decision analysis, Dr. Raiffa has authored a number of major books on the subject.

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alysts, and he writes clearly, and with urgency and passion. But he makes persistent claims of novelty for a program and a vision that are neither adequate nor new. Throughout this book Harrington insists that we are undergoing a fundamental transformation in political economy, but the policies he proposes do not show any recognition of that very transformation.

The transformation, Harrington says, is global and historic. Like Lekachman, he devotes a chapter to answering the conservative charge that big government has caused economic difficulties. Harrington argues, instead, for a "multifaceted" explanation that emphasizes new tendencies toward underconsumption as the cause of a "slow 1929." In particular, he stresses changes in the international economy and the shift in production from goods to services, which he sees as a leading reason for slower growth in productivity and real wages. Earlier in this century it was possible to bolster consumption through what Harrington calls "Fordist" strategies—high wages pegged to productivity growth and a higher "social wage" in the form of public benefits. Now that strategy has been undermined by the dynamics of capitalism as a world system.

Harrington's program for the "next" left, however, does not seem equal to the scale of this change. More employee participation, a wider diffusion of expertise, labor law reform—these are all familiar and worthy ideas, but as a cure they do not seem specific to the malady. When searching for an example of needed enlargement of the public sector, Harrington suggests "new regional rail systems under decentralized public ownership." I do not see the current problem to which this is an answer. The proposal owes more to socialist memory than to any reasonable sense of current priorities.

Symptomatic of the problem is the suggestion Harrington chooses to put first, a reduction of working hours, which he sees partly as a step toward the "abolition of wage labor." Now, the abolition of wage labor is the sort of aspiration that marks a man as not only impractical, but also irrelevant. As Harrington acknowledges, there is not the slightest chance that this will happen. But it is also not a good idea in principle: the alternatives to wage labor would almost certainly involve a more oppressive form of domination. It's this kind of gesture toward a discredited utopia that distinguishes socialists from liberals. Even where socialists support similar policy proposals, they harbor the illusion of a link to higher, grander objectives—to a classless society, to the withering away of the state, to an end to scarcity. And these are goals that no mature adult should take seriously a century after Marx.

I don't think that the details or the evidence about policy alternatives really interests Harrington. I am left with the uneasy sense that he wants to have it both ways—yes, there is a transforma-

Castrati In Caesar's Court

I. Remus

Of all court singers Caesar loves me best.
He makes me sing to him in his atrium
after festivals and Senate meetings.
Away from his bodyguards,
he reclines on cushions.
I set a stool beside him and begin:
"Hail, Caesar, godlike, indestructible."
The higher my voice soars
the more his features soften.
"Give me your paw, Remus," he murmurs,
guiding my hand to his head
where I finger his thinning curls
and stroke his forehead smooth.

II. Gracchus

He treats me like a jester.
Fat Bacchus, he calls me.
I once was a sullen boy soprano, thin
as an olive pit, well-known in Etruria.
The day his envoy entered the temple
and summoned me to him,
I knew years of learning to treat
my voice like a vestal virgin
would cost me my manhood.
Now I hide behind smiles
and fast no longer as I did back home.
At dawn I enter Caesar's wine cellar
with a key he gave me
and drink my fill, with honeyed bread.

III. Caius

Whenever he boasts about the wars
or makes me chant hymns
to Caesarion his son,
I feel his sword between my legs.
I am young; I will never again see home.
Yet I have sung with the best musicians
in the Republic, while my mother and sister
live on sesterces I send them.
In Umbria, where spring comes late
to the mountain passes, I picture them
hard by a fire whose wood I provide for,
my mother carding wool,
my sister spinning.

IV. Septimus

I am old, yet my skin is still soft,
clear as it was when his legions
stripped my countrymen of their rags
and bundled me off in a cart
as a prize capon from the provinces.
In Gaul I sang for shepherds
and begged better fare as a minstrel
than I do at his banquets in Rome.
How many cities sacked and villagers taxed
to pay for his evening repast.
Caesar never patted my knee
or called me his Gallic cantor.
The gods will set him straight
when I sing at his funeral.

James Reiss

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tion; no, it does not require any adjustments in the policies of the left. At one point Harrington says that the French socialist experience under Mitterrand shows that higher costs of production discourage employment, and consequently that "the left should avoid trying to redistribute income by means of the wage system." Yet elsewhere he says, "The entire post-World War II period has demonstrated over and over that the 'social wage,' i.e., the income that people receive independent of their wage labor, can only rise in tandem with the compensation for wage labor itself." Taken together, these two arguments do not leave much room for the redistributive policies Harrington proceeds to advocate.

Neither Harrington nor Lekachman addresses the structural problems that the new world economy creates for the left. Harrington wants fewer working hours and more worker participation, but contemporary economic change advances neither interest. The increased mobility of capital in the world economy undermines demands for economic democracy as well as for higher wages. The management of existing firms can threaten to move jobs abroad to retain prerogatives and control; and new firms developing elsewhere can escape legal requirements imposed on their competitors. In the United States, moreover, collective bargaining is now a weak instrument for pursuing these objectives. With only a minority of the work force unionized in most major industries, the power of organized labor is undermined by the unorganized majority.

ANY SERIOUS program for the left would have to show how these obstacles can be overcome. Neither of these books does. They testify to the limits of the left, not to its promise. At least the old Marxism had a theory of historical change that explained how political action could catch the tidal shifts in economy and society. The 20th century has stripped the left not only of illusions of innocence, but also of a plausible theory of history. Now there is not the slightest reason to believe that socialism is, or ought to be, capitalism's successor.

In America today the only left we have is liberal, whether or not it accepts that name. For all its troubles, liberalism remains the most resilient and capacious framework of public philosophy and practical choice available to us. If Americans who identify with the egalitarian values of the left ever hope to influence the direction of our public life, they will do so only by working within the liberal tradition: by contriving new instruments to manage capitalism, not to replace it. Liberalism is the only foundation on which an American "left," such as it is, can build a coalition broad enough to govern. The attachment to socialism, even in Harrington's moderate and democratic form, is ultimately a sectarian retreat from the real possibilities of shaping America's future.

PAUL STARR

Paul Starr is professor of sociology at Princeton University.

WHAT BECOMES A LEGEND LEAST

Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Legend
by Ernest Samuels
with the collaboration of Jayne Newcomer Samuels

(Belknap/Harvard University Press, 680 pp., $25)

"So much in my past that I hate to evoke. Short of violence, I have been capable of every sin, every misdemeanor, every crime," Bernard Berenson confided to his diary in 1958, a year before his death at the age of 94.

> With horror I think what I should have become if I lived the life of an ill-paid professor, or struggling writer, how rebellious, if I had not lived a life devoted to great art and the aristocratically pyramidal structure of society that it serves, or worse still if I had remained in the all but proletarian condition I lived as a Jewish immigrant lad in Boston. So I remain skeptical about my personality. It really seems to have reached its present integration in the last twenty years, with the wide and far vision I now enjoy, with *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*, expecting little and trying to be grateful for that, the serenity for which I am now admired. But I keep hearing the Furies, and never forget them.

This, the last decipherable entry in the diary, sounds a theme that had become a leitmotiv in Berenson's later meditations on himself. Following the award of an honorary doctorate from the University of Florence in 1956, the celebrated connoisseur confessed that "it does not change my feeling of failure, of inadequacy, of incompetence."

The Making of a Legend is the subtitle of the second volume of Ernest Samuels's authorized biography—the first, published in 1979, was subtitled *The Making of a Connoisseur*. That legend, which came to represent as much of an enigma to Berenson himself as it does to us, involves the transformation of a poor ten-year-old Jewish immigrant from the Lithuanian pale into "B. B.," the world-renowned expert on Italian art, a central figure in the cultural and social life of Europe and America, the millionaire master of an Italian villa that was at once an omphalos of high society and a Mecca for young scholars.

All the proper Horatio Alger ingredients are there to validate the story as one of genuinely American success. The youngster's natural talents—his combination of intelligence and looks, sensibility and ambition—led him from his North End ghetto home to the Boston Latin School, and then on to Boston University for a year, before his confirming acceptance ("with the help of benevolent Bostonians") to Harvard. There he studied ancient and Oriental languages and became a leading literary figure on campus. Welcomed to a world beyond his origins, Berenson found supporting patronage in Boston society. Although he failed to win the Parker Traveling Fellowship at Harvard, he sailed off to Europe to continue his education, and to pursue his life goal: to become a great writer.

The young Berenson's imagination was shaped by his reading in several languages. German, Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, and Russian were the languages he grew up with. But it was in English that he created the model of the self he wished to become—the English of Walter Pater. Reading the pages of Pater's *The Renaissance*, Berenson pledged himself to the contemplation of beauty and exquisite sensation, "to burn always with this

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hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy." And Pater's Marius the Epicurean set not only an aesthetic ideal for him, but a religious aim as well. On November 22, 1885, in Trinity Church, the 20-year-old Berenson was baptized an Episcopalian. Some five years later, in February 1891, having committed himself to the study of Italian art, he converted up to Catholicism at the Tuscan monastery of Monte Oliveto.

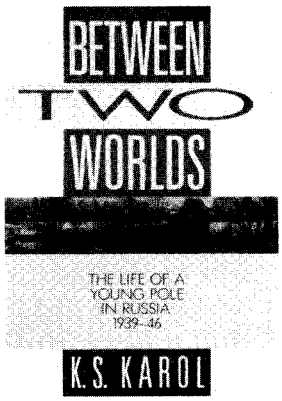
THIS SECOND VOLUME of Samuels's biography picks up the story in the spring of 1904. Berenson and his wife, Mary, are returning to Europe after a triumphal tour of the United States. It was on that trip that the couple discovered their special mission: to educate the taste of a new generation of wealthy American collectors. Berenson's reputation had been established by a series of books on the Italian painters of the Renaissance, a monograph on Lorenzo Lotto, and his monumental *Drawings of the Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*.

From the beginning, his work had a double appeal: professional and cultural. Professionally, it brought a precision of observation and a deliberate control to the connoisseurship of Italian art. The *Drawings* especially demonstrated method and established order in a field that had been ruled by a chaos of subjectivism. Continuing the work of his master, Giovanni Morelli, the pioneer of "scientific" connoisseurship, Berenson laid the foundations for a systematic knowledge of Italian painting. Only such an approach could validate the taxonomic activity of connoisseurship. His famous lists of attributions, which he would continue revising to the end of his life, became touchstones in the field.

The cultural appeal of his early work reflected Berenson's higher ambition: to offer a vocabulary of aesthetic experience that would enjoy a resonance beyond the professional world of connoisseurship. His aim in the four essays on the Italian painters of the Renaissance had been "to sketch a theory of the arts." He summarized that theory in the epilogue to the essays' collected publication: "All the arts are compounded of ideated sensations, no matter through what medium conveyed, provided they are communicated in such wise as to produce a direct effect of life-enhancement." The "principal if not sole sources of life-enhancement are TACTILE VALUES, MOVEMENT, and SPACE-COMPOSITION, by which I mean ideated sensations of contact, of texture, of weight, of support, of energy, and of union with one's surroundings." Out of contemporary psychology and art theory, he in effect sought an explanation of—an apology for—his own Paterian aestheticism.

Read today, these early essays on the Italian painters can only seem terribly dated, however much they tell us about the appeal of Renaissance art to fin-de-siècle sensibilities. They remain smug and presumptuous in their judgments and curiously narrow in their concern for an aesthetic decorum; they evince a constant embarrassment before the representation of pathos. Whatever their intellectual ambition, as art history they are simply naive. Despite his desire to "rank not merely as a connoisseur but as a scholar and humanist," Berenson never really developed his "theory" beyond the "sketch" stage. Yet terms such as "ideated sensations," "tactile values," and "life-enhancement" infiltrated his quotidian language, and that of those around him—including his biographer. They became clichés, parodies of critical response. Situations and people became "life-enhancing"—or, in

"Makes Pasternak's *Zhivago* seem like an understatement."*



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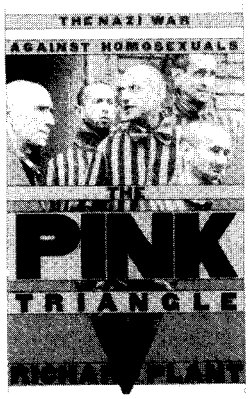

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Mary's wry disapprobation of Berenson's sister Bessie, "life-diminishing."

"LIFE-ENHANCEMENT" might indeed be seen as the operative notion in Berenson, binding his professional and cultural—or, better, social—worlds. It expressed, in a sense, the aspiration of the youngster seeking to elevate himself above his ghetto origins. It was what he found in the writings of Pater, and, shaped by that reading, in his own experience of works of art. It was to be through art that he would satisfy the life-enhancing aspirations of his younger self. Abandoning his "vague but radiant hopes of becoming a poet, a novelist, a thinker, a critic—a new Goethe in short," he dedicated himself to connoisseurship, with "no idea, no ambition, no expectation, no thought of reward. We shall give ourselves up to learning," he recalls exclaiming to his friend Enrico Costa (the two young aesthetes were sitting at a café in Bergamo, hometown of the master Morelli). They vowed "to distinguish between the authentic works of an Italian painter of the 15th and 16th centuries, and those commonly ascribed to him. . . . We must not stop until we are sure that every Lotto is a Lotto, every Cariani a Cariani, every Santacroce a Santacroce." But that noble life of dedication to the knowledge of art—of "conoshing," as he and Mary merrily referred to it in the privacy of their correspondence—required funding. As they learned, it could indeed be made to support itself.

"No thought of reward" was one founding principle that had to be sacrificed. The systematic exploration of Italy in search of paintings required money. Early on they set their sights on the acquisition of a motor car. Also early in his career, Berenson realized the value (and the cost) of photographs for the study of art, in making available (and visible) works hidden away in the dark recesses of churches or otherwise difficult of access. His vast collection of such prints, an unrivaled repository of visual knowledge, remains one of the great resources for research at the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies at I Tatti.

Established at Berenson's villa after his death, the center represents the fulfillment of the connoisseur's longtime dream. Possibly inspired by Isabella Stewart Gardner's new museum, her contribution to Boston culture, Berenson conceived the idea of leaving his own collections and villa to Harvard, as an "institute for humanistic studies." The expensive development of I Tatti, its library and *fototeca*, provided a major incentive for Berenson's now infamous dealings with the art dealer Joseph Duveen. Mary, watching his plans for an institutional monument grow to obsession, and fearing for the legacy to her own children, complained during one of the many crises in the "Duveen business": "B. B. is to hoard it all up for future yahoos to come to I Tatti."

"The startling story of the secret collusion between the century's most eminent art critic and the world's most successful art dealer," reads the gleeful jacket blurb on Colin Simpson's recently published *Artful Partners: Bernard Berenson and Joseph Duveen* (Macmillan). Self-righteous journalism, however, has long thrived on speculation regarding Berenson's contract with Duveen, with its coded names (B. B. was "Doris") and its secret "X" book of accounts. Certainly Berenson became a wealthy man by plying his profession: locating pictures and bringing them onto the art market, validating them by his attributions, cultivating clients and educating them. By 1937 he could boast that most of the Italian paintings then in American public or private collections had arrived with his "visa on their passport." For every picture sold by Duveen (or other dealers with whom he worked) Berenson received a percentage of the profits. In other circumstances, in return for directing a picture to a particular collector, he received a percentage of the price from the buyer. That he changed his opinions about pictures over the years, modifying his attributions, is hardly cause for scandal.

One of the problems with the recent spate of books about Berenson is that their authors little understand the workings of connoisseurship or art history, the historical conditions of artistic production and the ambivalences of authorship in a workshop involving master and assistants, the frequent impossibility of arriving at definitive conclusions. The issue is not simply whether the attributions are correct or incorrect; unconfirmed by historical documentation, attributions can only be working hypotheses. Moreover, the problems go beyond the major names that claim the biggest prices in the art market; it is the hundreds of minor masters and anonymous followers that provide the real challenge to connoisseurship. Much of Berenson's achievement lay in that realm of the unknown and the

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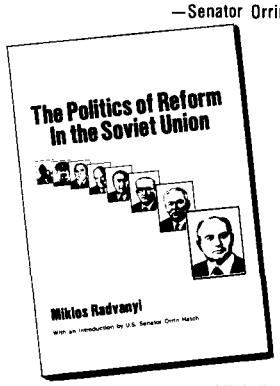

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unnamed. (A proper study of his attributions, and of connoisseurship in the 20th century, remains to be written, although a beginning was made by David Alan Brown in the handbook accompanying the National Gallery's 1979 exhibition "Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting.")

What does come through in the pages of Samuels's biography, however, is Berenson's discomfort with the Duveen business. We find him often resisting the pressure to publish a work, to shade his view, to bend to the desires of the market. After all, his professional integrity was all he had. He refused to publish certain pictures that he had already certified for the firm, lest it appear "as if his pen was in the service of his interests." Aware of his own ambivalent position straddling the worlds of commerce and art, he remained concerned to preserve his "rank not merely as a connoisseur but as a scholar and a humanist."

IF THE DUVEEN business has remained a stain on the image of B. B., it must also be seen as part of the legend, part of the biography of social and economic climbing and maneuvering, of living among the "squillionaires" in "Ritzonia" (to use the Berensons' own private argot), of an impressive entanglement of life-enhancing love affairs and intense jealousies of both husband and wife. Our view of I Tatti, the *locus amoenus* of the legend, must also accommodate contradiction. George Santayana, one of Berenson's old Harvard cohort and a visitor to the villa, reported that his host "is full of esprit, and there is a stream of distilled culture flowing over us continually in the form of soulful tourists and weary *dilettànti* who frequent this place." Clive Bell, less indulgent, recalled that I Tatti was "full of Old Masters, mysterious countesses, and unspeakable Americans." Tending the Paterian "hard, gem-like flame" well into the 20th century proved something of an anomalous dedication indeed.

Just as anomalous was Berenson's very notion of art history. He was clear about the life he had chosen, "a life devoted to great art and the aristocratically pyramidal structure that it serves." In effect, his educational role had been to prepare those able to afford it to ascend with him, to share that devotion. Great art was to be made accessible to those prepared for the experience: "Without connoisseurship a history of art is impossible." Berenson was seeking the rationale, and the objective standards, of his own profession. In 1901, in his search for a rigorous critical method, he declared that "the history of art should be studied much more abstractly than it has ever been studied, and freed as much as possible from entangling irrelevancies of personal anecdote and parasitic growths of petty documentation." Following the classifying momentum of Morelli, he confessed:

> I, for one, have been for many years cherishing the conviction that the world's art can be, nay, should be, studied as independently of all documents as is the world's fauna or the world's flora. The effort to classify the one should proceed along the lines of the others, and if done with equal brains and equal strenuousness of purpose, the success surely should be equal.

Berenson's values were essentially formal. Only the approach of the connoisseur could afford that direct, life-enhancing encounter with a work of art. Historical scholarship could only follow, not lead. Considerations of social or religious context, of patronage or of personality, fell into the category of "petty documentation." More surprisingly, so did questions of technique. The idealist Berenson prided himself on being above such material issues. Failing to recall whether Leonardo's *Belle Ferronière* in the Louvre, a picture he claimed to have seen "a thousand times," was on wood or on canvas, he lamely defended his ignorance: "It's as if you asked me on what kind of paper Shakespeare wrote his immortal sonnets." In his essay on the Florentine painters, written in 1896, he had observed that because innovations in technique, "indispensable though they may become to painting as a craft, are in themselves questions of theoretic and applied chemistry, and not of art, they do not concern us here." Just such an attitude, with its genteel aloofness from workshop practice, would remain a barrier to Berenson's fuller critical comprehension of painting, as well as to the establishment of that scientific basis of connoisseurship that he otherwise professed. It would also undermine some of his own judgments as a connoisseur.

Early on Berenson had developed an aversion to the art history of German scholars. And what began in part as a rivalry between connoisseurs developed into a complicated and deeply rooted prejudice. Having failed to respond to the pioneering work of the great Germanic formalists, such as Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wöllflin, he was even less responsive to the intellectual and cultural approach of Aby Warburg and the generation that followed him—whose names, interestingly, are absent from the indices to Samuels's volumes. One art historian of that generation, above all, came to epitomize for Berenson the worst in art historical scholarship: Erwin Panofsky, whose intellectual approach relegated connoisseurship to the lowest level of the study of art.

What Panofsky would call iconology represented an effort to understand the "intrinsic meaning or content" of an image, its "world of 'symbolical' values," to examine and explain it as the manifestation of a larger body of ideas, the outcome of a complex of historical, cultural, and personal forces. Above all, the work of art stood as a phenomenon to be studied and to be explained. Its deepest meanings lay well beyond the private delectation of the aesthete, beyond the privileged possession of the collector—accessible only to the inquiring mind. In Panofsky, then, Berenson found personified a combination of values that he himself had ignored or resolutely rejected, values that amounted to an indictment of all he had come to stand for, and that he despised for being both Germanic and Jewish.

AS A Yiddish-speaking immigrant from Eastern Europe, the young Berenson had felt the scornful condescension of the settled German Jews of Boston. That boyhood resentment, he later confessed, remained with him throughout his life. During World War I, he changed the Teutonic spelling of his name (Bernhard became Bernard) and gave full expression to his anti-German sentiments. Responding to Berenson's animus toward German scholarship—expressed in this case through the pen of Mary, always his close collaborator—Wilhelm Bode, the director of the Berlin museum, wrote in 1903 that it was "probably due to the circumstances that Mr. Berenson is of Russian-German ancestry and . . . believes he must disown this among his present Anglo-American compatriots." However much Berenson may have on principle viewed historical scholarship as incompatible with the kind of aesthetic sensibility he sought to cultivate as the basis for the study of art, Bode's perception was not wide of the mark.

Following his religious conversion in Boston, Berenson developed an accommodating anti-Semitism. To his benefactress Isabella Gardner, for example, he

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wrote of traveling to Vienna on a train "with Jews and other indecencies." The more secure his position within society seemed, the stronger such expressions became, especially as the Berensons came to realize how much they were dependent on Jewish money. Courting the collector Benjamin Altman on behalf of Duveen, Berenson could complain of "that old sheenie of an Altman"; or he could casually record having dined out in "Art Jewry with Mrs. William Salomon and Sir Joseph Duveen." The pages of Samuels's biography abound with such casual references, Berenson himself just managing to keep up with Mary in nastiness.

The advent of Hitler and the Nazi persecution, however, could not fail to mollify their attitude. "We are heartbroken at this terrible streak of brutality that has appeared among them," Mary wrote in response to the expulsion of Jews from the German universities. "So many of our friends, too, are rendered destitute—because they belong to the cleverest race in Europe." But sympathy for the plight of Jewish scholars yielded to a kind of professional paranoia. As Berenson observed the exodus of European minds to America, he saw a major threat to his aesthetic hegemony at home, a threat to his kind of art history based on connoisseurship. It was Panofsky—with his interpretations of Renaissance images within the richest contexts of the European cultural tradition—who personified this menace.

Berenson's response, in his correspondence with Americans, attained a pitch of hysteria and rhetorical irresponsibility that indicates the depth of his anxiety. The connoisseur was repelled by the "wonder-working Rabbis and cabalistic spell-binders with all their enticing irrelevancies." It was bad enough that Princeton had shown itself hospitable to all this, hosting those "refu-Jews in their concentration camp" at the university. Worse still for Berenson must have been the fear that certain of those "spell-binders and irrelevancy-mongers from darkest Judeo-Germany . . . are threatening to invade Harvard." (He must have feared for the future of I Tatti, that "lay monastery for leisurely culture" that was to perpetuate his own ideals for the study of art.) With splenetic sarcasm he drew upon his vocabulary of anti-Semitism, inflecting it with his own special brand of anti-Teutonism. "Poor dears, the Austrian contingent is even more pitiful than the P—roosien one.

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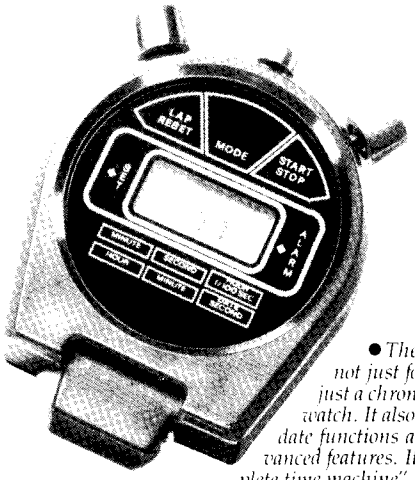

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They may have Jewish noses and souls but their minds are super-German," he wrote to Philip Hofer, "and that to me and not their Jewishness makes them a public danger. German-mindedness, *voilà l'ennemi!*"

World War II forced Berenson to confront himself. The persona that he had created, the self-made gentile, had to recognize that "the rising tide of anti-Semitism may reach me and sweep me out of Italy." His survival of the war, partly in hiding, brought him back to his origins. He recognized himself as a Jew, "a typical 'Talmud Jew,'" devoted to "learning." In his late diaries he identified with Kafka's "minutely detailed self-awareness," and associated his own "narcissism" with that of Bergson and Proust, wondering whether it was not really due "to our Jewish origins. Hunted, always insecure, our ancestors must have developed unusual gifts of inner as well as outer observation, which nowadays turns us into psychologists, scientists, novelists, critics."

Self-hatred was turned to self-respect in what Berenson acknowledged as the late "integration" of his own personality: "I am more and more amazed to discover how seldom I meet an interesting thinker, scholar, or writer who does not turn out to be a Jew, a half-Jew, or quarter-Jew." Eagerly identifying himself as a member of the tribe—indeed, with a grandiosity that can only be called high chutzpah—he found late solace in the traditions of his youth that he had so long rejected. "How easy and warm the atmosphere between born Jews like Isaiah Berlin, Lewis Namier, myself, Bela Horowitz, when we drop the mask of being goyim and return to Yiddish reminiscences, and Yiddish stories and witticisms."

The July 1888 issue of the *Harvard Monthly* published a story by the young Bernhard Berenson, called "The Death and Burial of Israel Koppel." It is the tale of a young Polish Jew who had gone off to Vilna "to satisfy the yearning of his heart for that knowledge of the Gentile world which was beginning to sift into the Jewish communes of east-central Europe." He returns to his village in all the pride of apostasy, shorn of the traditional earlocks and black coat of the ghetto, vaunting his knowledge of the gentiles and scandalizing the community. He is blamed for the deaths of several infants, his heathenish ways having provoked the anger of God. Punishment comes when he is stricken while reading a gentile book and falls to the floor, apparently dead. The customary funeral is denied him by the synagogue, and his father must pay dearly to have his son buried. Following the burial, the father dreams of being pressed by an unbearable weight. The meaning of the dream is clear: his son has been buried alive. The grave is opened, and the bloodied body confirms the vision of the vengeance of the Lord: "An expiation for all of us." Unlike Israel Koppel, Bernard Berenson survived his apostasy.

Out of the pages of Samuels's biography there emerges a Bernard Berenson at once larger and smaller than the legend, a richer and more human protagonist. Berenson never wrote the magnum opus he dreamed of, *The Decline and Recovery of the Arts*, the great book that was to have secured his reputation as a scholar and a humanist, and not just as a connoisseur. In the final decades of his life, Berenson evidently came to recognize that he had cut himself off from the very sources that might have sustained that ambitious enterprise. He came to recognize that between "a life devoted to great art" and "the aristocratically pyramidal structure that it serves" there may indeed be a profound contradiction.

DAVID ROSAND

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VERSES AND VOICES

Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric
by Donald Davie

(University of Tennessee Press, 76 pp., $8.50)

This first book on the poetry of Czeslaw Milosz available in English is not, as would be natural in the case of any Eastern European émigré, a translation of a bulky monograph written by some obscure Slavic compatriot of the poet. Instead it is an original essay, an amplification of a series of lectures, by a well-known English poet and critic whose previous interest in Polish literature was rather marginal. (Though as I reread Davie's deft paraphrases of several passages from *Pan Tadeusz*, the 19th-century epic by Adam Mickiewicz, I can't help but wonder what would happen if he committed himself to translating Polish poetry full time.) Davie's authorship testifies to the increasing accessibility of Milosz's work for an English-speaking literary audience. Especially since the publication of *The Separate Notebooks* and *Unattainable Earth*, two splendid products of his collaboration with the translators Robert Hass and Robert Pinsky, Milosz has attracted considerable attention from English and American critics. It seems that finally they perceive him simply as a poet—not as a foreign poet whose supposed greatness is hardly visible behind the imprisoning bars of his translation.

Still, it is telling that the body of criticism in English has consisted so far of dozens of essays and reviews, without any attempt at a broader, more comprehensive treatment of Milosz's work. One reason for this partial attention may be the relatively late discovery of his poetry in the West. The other, even more obvious, is that the non-Polish critics know their limits. They realize that not all of Milosz's work yields to translation and, as a consequence, has not been translated; and also that the half-century-long evolution of his poetry is not fully reflected in the rather arbitrary order of his four English collections; and that even the best, author-controlled translation is only translation.

Davie's slender book, which for all intents and purposes is nothing more than an expanded essay in several parts, reflects this sort of caution to an extreme. His warnings against the perils of dealing with translations and translationese ring out time and again, like a persistent ostinato, in whatever he writes about Milosz's poetry and prose, which (he hastens to emphasize) he was unable to read in the original. We also hear, in reference to *Bells in Winter*, that "much of Milosz's poetry is not yet available in English, and of that which has been made available the chronology is far from certain"—a curious comment if we consider that this par-

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ticular poet lives neither in another century nor on another planet, and that a letter asking him to dispel chronological uncertainties could be sent to Berkeley, California, from just about anywhere, including Knoxville, Tennessee. I suspect that Davie's knowledge of Milosz's work and career is much broader and deeper than he pretends. (By and large, he shows signs of quite sufficient familiarity with issues of Polish history and literary tradition; I spotted only a few minor mistakes, such as the wrong date for the Warsaw uprising and a slight distortion in the first name of the poet Aleksander Wat.) Davie's overcautious approach may well be part of his critical strategy: it is a way of forestalling the objections of the reader, who might expect that this first book on Milosz's poetry would indeed offer a more complete, all-encompassing picture.

Davie's book has, in fact, no such ambitions. In full accordance with its title, it focuses on the single issue of "the insufficiency of the lyric," or of the lyrical mode in general, as a key to Milosz's poetry. At the same time, however, it acknowledges that this particular issue is neither Milosz's only problem nor only Milosz's problem. In other words, "the insufficiency of lyric" is, for Davie, just one angle from which Milosz's work can be viewed, whereas this issue also appears to him to be a much broader concern of 20th-century poetry in general, a concern that finds one manifestation (perhaps the most characteristic) in Milosz's work.

And Davie has no aspiration to completeness in yet another sense. At least some of the chapters stem from his earlier essays on or reviews of specific books by Milosz. Thus, each of the first three parts of the text is just such a comment on a specific book published by Milosz in English: his novel *The Issa Valley*, his collection of poems *Bells in Winter*, and his collection of essays *The Witness of Poetry*. After this preliminary investigation of Milosz's system of ideas in three different genres, Davie pits himself, in the chapters "Milosz's Departure from Lyric" and "Milosz and the Dithyramb," against the title's suggested theme. The book ends with a return to specific texts: "A Postscript" offering some additional comments provoked by the American publication of *The Land of Ulro*, and an "Appendix" analyzing Milosz's wartime poetry (in particular, his lyrical sequence "The World: A Naive Poem").

The book's construction, then, seems to be founded on a rather random principle, one delineated at least partly by the order of publication of the English versions of Milosz's books. In spite of this, however, Davie's constant focus on "the insufficiency of the lyric" binds the separate essays together. The initial essay, on *The Issa Valley*, introduces the problem indirectly by trying to define the essence of Milosz's experience. In contrast to critics such as John Bayley, who tend to overemphasize the poet's "rootedness" in the supposed solidity of a "provincial pre-ideological life," Davie views Milosz's witness to our century as "a representative and therefore *déraciné* intellectual," as an individual torn away from his natural background by the violent stream of modern history.

In the subsequent chapters of his book Davie argues that this kind of experience is realized in Milosz's innovative and baffling poetics, which compels the reader "to re-think the nature of poetic discourse." By juxtaposing Milosz with the far more traditional poet C. H. Sisson, Davie locates Milosz's innovation mainly in the unstable position of the speaker within a poem. In more conventional forms of lyrical discourse, it is a given that the speaker occupies a fixed point in time and space for the duration of a poem, but Milosz's speaker is "always flitting, moving about." His poems are marked by surprising shifts of perspective, focus, and viewpoint, from temporal and spatial to philosophical.

This is particularly striking in the poems in which one speaker's field of vision simultaneously encompasses two such drastically different worlds as early 20th-century Lithuania and present-day California. These poems demonstrate that Milosz's method of blending different perspectives is "plainly incompatible with the single singing voice of the lyric." Compared with more traditional poets, even to those, such as Boris Pasternak, whose experiences were similarly molded by the pressures of Eastern European history, Milosz seems to have "the more voracious . . . appetite"; he constantly "seeks poetic forms more comprehensive and heterogeneous than any lyric, even the most sustained and elaborate." In order to embrace the totality of experience, Milosz is ready, then, to sacrifice pure lyricism, and to replace it with an endless search for, as he himself put it, "a more spacious form."

Davie correctly points out that this search is driven only partly by Milosz's awareness of "the insufficiency of the lyric mode for registering, except glancingly, the complexity of 20th-century experience." A more fundamental reason for Milosz's quest is his own philosophical system. It is based on a paradoxical premise: on the one hand, the presumption of the absolute pre-eminence of reality (which the poet is obliged to name in all its complexity and abundance); on the other, the equally strong conviction that language (the poet's only tool in naming reality) is inevitably insufficient to the task. For Milosz, there is no doubt that reality exists objectively, beyond the confines of our mind and language; and there is no doubt, either, that language does have some access to reality. But this access is heavily restricted by language's natural limitations. Yet, again paradoxically, it is precisely the awareness of these limitations that drives the poet to realize his obligation: to pursue elusive reality, to pinpoint "the real" with a name.

In Milosz's case, this sense of obligation generates a wide range of consequences—from the religious and the metaphysical (such as his belief that the poet's mind is able to perceive solely the external surface of "the real" and only vaguely sense the existence of its "other

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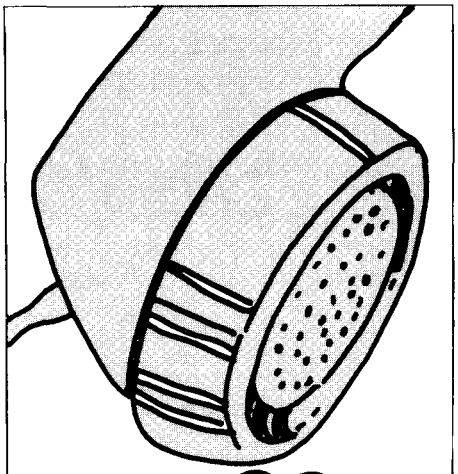

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side") to the ethical and social (such as his dislike of the bohemian, or marginal and detached, status of the poet in modern society) to the stylistic (such as his rejection of any specialized and restricted "lyrical language"). And it ultimately causes Milosz to deny what Keats called poetry's "negative capability"—the notion that has served, since Romanticism, as the justification for reducing poetry to the lyrical mode, for endowing the poet with the privilege of a certain irresponsibility. By his war period Milosz had already proved himself to be in a fundamental conflict with this kind of amoral aesthetics—particularly with its modernist version, which in our century "has declared the artist to be under no obligation to anything but the structure of his own sensibility."

"Milosz and the Dithyramb," the most original part of Davie's book, attempts to find an answer to the question of why, in spite of the poet's predominant tendency to seek "a more spacious form," one can still find in his work a number of instances of apparently traditional, first-person lyrical discourse. Milosz, Davie states once again, is, not unlike Pound before him, "an immodest poet" who is organically distrustful of, and unwilling to be bound by, the rules of "lyrical purity." Even his occasional use of seemingly subjective lyrical monologue does not contradict this: in Davie's view, such a monologue exemplifies the poetics of the dithyramb, and, as Nietzsche argued in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the dithyramb is a genre that combines lyrical appearance with non-lyrical essence. The dithyrambic "I" is "not overweening because [it is] not in any way personal"; accordingly, the dithyrambic mode as such "allows the modern poet to participate in the orgiastic release, in crowd-awareness, at the same time as he maintains his distance from it, structuring and thereby chastening it."

Despite its inventiveness, the argument Davie presents in this chapter doesn't entirely convince. It seems to me, quite simply, that the finely filed key of the dithyrambic mode cannot unlock every possible first-person poem by Milosz. Indeed, few of his poems can be defined as dithyrambs unless we stretch the term to the point of meaninglessness. Their inherent contradiction between a quasi-lyrical subjectivity of perspective and an anti-lyrical quest for "a more spacious form" calls for a more comprehensive explanation. Such an explanation could have been provided by the concept of polyphony, which Davie here either neglects or dismisses.

One reason for this dismissal could be the fact that the recent popularity of Bakhtinian methodology has already made "polyphony" a trendy and therefore slightly suspect term. Still, Bakhtin or no Bakhtin, it is hard to avoid the use of that concept whenever one tries to understand who is actually speaking in Milosz's poems. His poetry has always been many-voiced. I do not mean only such Baroque *silvae rerum* and mosaics of bewilderingly different styles and kinds of speech as his more recent long poems ("From the Rising of the Sun," "The Separate Notebooks," *Unattainable Earth*), but also poems from the earlier phases of his career, in which the interplay of various voices—more or less different from the author's own—has always been an underlying principle:

> Consciousness expressed in itself every separate birch
> And the woods of New Hampshire, covered in May with green haze.
> The faces of people are in it without number, the courses
> Of planets, and things past and a portent of the future.
> Then one should extract from it what one can, slowly,
> Not trusting anybody. And it won't be much, for language is weak.

In this sense, it doesn't really matter whether the first person monologue is or is not employed in a poem by Milosz, or whether its "I" can or cannot be interpreted as the dithyrambic "I." What does matter is rather the way in which this "I" and its voice relate to other voices resounding in a poem, or to the author's own projected stance in the text. In Milosz, polyphony is much more than just a technical device. It grows out of his artistic philosophy, his conviction that "the real" has to be named in all its multifaceted and multivoiced richness, and thus saved from transience, oblivion, or death. It is a pity that Davie's insights have not led him to consider polyphony and the genre of a poetic *silva rerum* as the ultimate consequences of "the insufficiency of lyric" in Milosz's work. Without this kind of overarching conclusion, his penetrating analyses remain just a set of sturdy walls and pillars waiting for a roof.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK

Stanislaw Baranczak's book on the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert will be published by Harvard University Press this fall.

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Old Tunes

SINCE BABY BOOMERS will account for 60 percent of the electorate in 1988, the pollsters are busy debating just how homogeneous the market really is and whether one pitch can appeal to the whole population bulge. So far the only consensus is that it's a mistake to assume that you can just play their old '60s songs and the boomers will dance. Such transparent exploitation doesn't seem to go over at all. Walter Mondale's campaign ad with Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young crooning "Teach Your Children" in the background certainly didn't do much for him last time around. But in a recent "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour" interview, Senator Joseph Biden, who has decided (with a little help from Pat Caddell) that he's the baby boomers' savior, blabbed on and on about their hopes, their fears, their memories, their dreams, their ideals—and "their music." We boomers raised our eyebrows: What do you mean "their music," white man? (Biden missed out on boomer membership by a few years.) But it turns out that the senator is safely off the track by miles. The song the high school band played over and over in the Wilmington, Delaware, railway station the day he declared his candidacy for president wasn't exactly what I was expecting: "It's a Small World After All," the treacly tune that was piped into the Pepsi pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York. You can't accuse Biden of corrupting a classic.

AS FRED BARNES reported, the joke in the British election was that Mrs. Thatcher's theme song, written by Andrew Lloyd Webber, was an outtake from his hit *Evita*. (And why not? The anthem of her last campaign, right after the Falklands War, might as well have been "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina.") In fact, her opponents were the ones with the seriously self-aggrandizing themes. Neil Kinnock selected Brahms's First Symphony for his light accompaniment. The Alliance's rallies and press conferences were heralded by a Handel trumpet piece. Maybe Mrs. T.'s campaign consultant was onto a good gimmick: use music as a means of self-mockery. Certainly his candidate was in desperate need of humanizing humor, but so are all of ours. George Bush might get a boost by playing "Boola Boola" in the background. And what could show more self-knowledge than for bombastic Joe Biden to accompany himself with "Blowin' in the Wind"? For that spectacle, baby boomers wouldn't begrudge him one of their tunes.

A COUPLE of weeks ago, while *Washington Post* readers were pondering an article in the Sunday Outlook section entitled "IS ROCK MUSIC ROTTING OUR KIDS' MINDS?"—an excerpt from Allan Bloom's surprise best seller, *The Closing of the American Mind*—East German rock fans were rioting near the Berlin Wall. The juxtaposition makes a great case-study for Introduction to Rock Theory. Mr. Bloom wants to do away with Walkmen and rescue our youth from music that erodes "the beliefs and morals necessary for a liberal society." Mr. Honecker's henchmen wanted to keep the youthful crowds from getting close enough to the Brandenburg Gate to hear the Eurythmics, Genesis, and David Bowie, who were giving a concert on the Western side of the wall. The authorities' motivation, at least as the frustrated fans interpreted it, was fear that the music threatened to undermine the beliefs and morals necessary for an illiberal society: "Freedom," the young East Germans shouted, "Down with the wall," and "We want Gorbachev." The different dire prognoses about the impact of rock music, as the intro course will suggest, are not necessarily as contradictory as they sound: what's decadent in capitalist culture could be incendiary in a totalitarian one. But for the full development of the debate, the reading list awaits Gorbachev's forthcoming book, *The Opening of the Soviet Mind*.

AMERICA'S EDUCATIONAL inferiority complex has gone too far. "U.S. SCHOOLCHILDREN FOUND TO MASTER SOME LANGUAGE SKILLS," the *New York Times* recently announced, as though our youth can barely string two syllables together without special exertion. That used to be the case, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress, which announced with concern not too long ago that American schoolchildren "have difficulty organizing and expressing their ideas in a thoughtful manner." But no more. On the basis of a 16-minute writing test administered in 1984 to nine-, 13-, and 17-year-old students, the agency's new report (funded by the government) exults: "Older students are more proficient than younger ones in their use of written language at both the sentence and the word levels." According to the *Times*, the team of educational testers has also happily discovered that "spelling improves markedly at the older ages." This report illustrates one of the problems with the current fad of apocalyptic educational pronouncements: expectations for improvement tend to get lowered ludicrously—expectations on the part of educational researchers and bureaucrats, that is. At a testing conference in Boulder, Colorado, they invited everyone who is "concerned about how well the nation's students are learning to control the conventions of written language" to share their great relief in the new findings. I can't think of many parents, teachers, or students who are likely to be impressed that 17-year-olds express their ideas in a more thoughtful manner than fourth graders. But maybe that's taking too much for granted: to judge by quotations from the report, the manner doesn't improve markedly at the older ages.

YOU KNOW our country is standing tall again when the postmaster general announces, "My goal is to do whatever is needed to establish the Postal Service as the leading service enterprise in America." The strategy that Preston R. Tisch proposes sounds like a back-to-the-future trendsetter. He says he wants to equip a fleet of postal vans to cruise through the nation's neighborhoods like ice cream trucks—or like that antiquated service enterprise, the tinker's wagon. At the sound of the friendly bell, kids will clamor to go out and buy stamps to lick. Adults will emerge with mail to weigh, just like their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers once hurried out with knives in need of grinding. I'm not sure how all the quaintness will strike the deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, who has been goading the government to get with it. "At one time," he chides, "the federal manager was a leader in the innovative application of technology." He's pushing public sector use of that novelty, the credit card. This may be the occasion for the ultimate time warp: buying stamps off a truck with an American Express card.

A. H.

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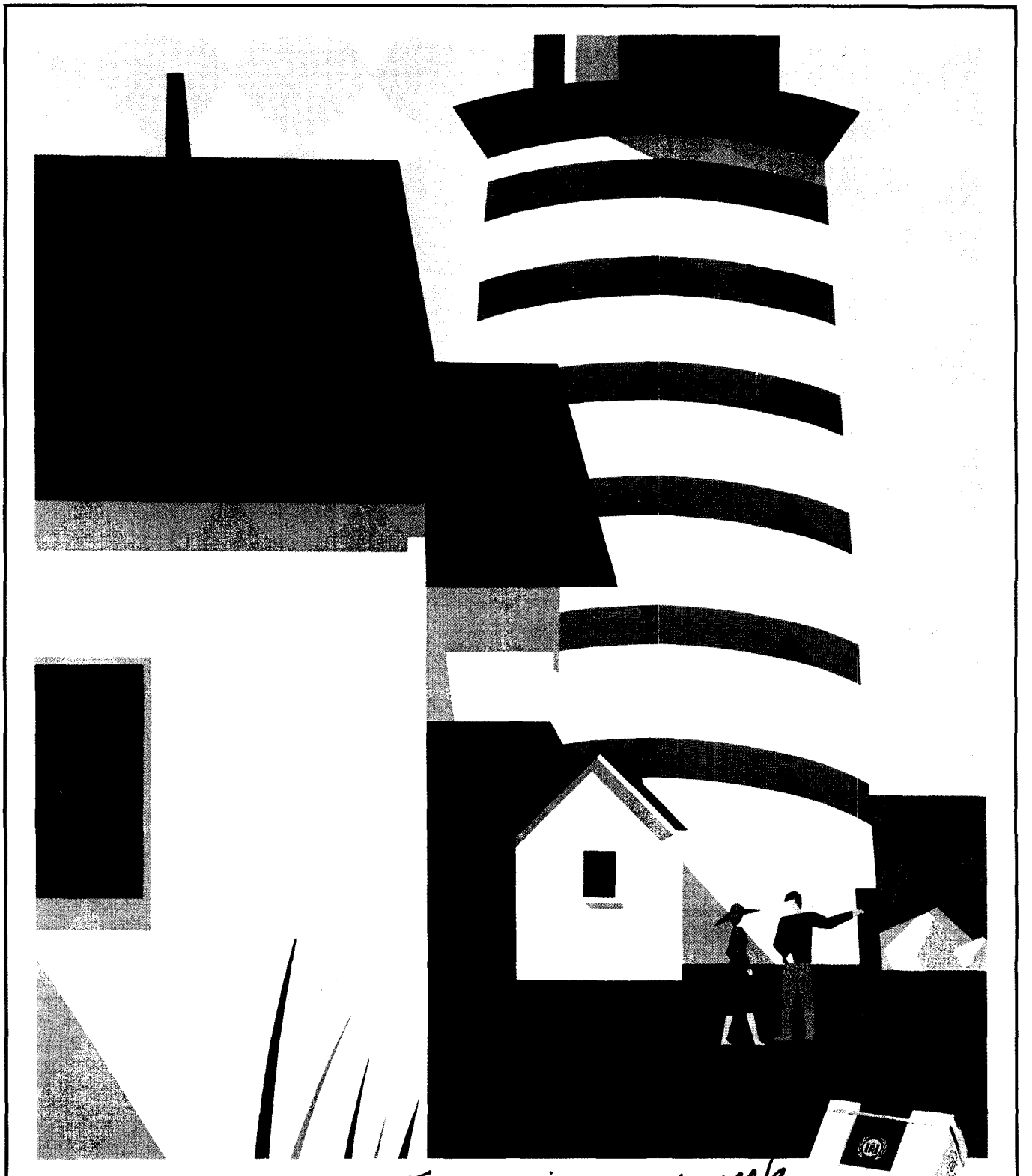

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